

Goodword

Islamic Studies

A Graded Course
Grade 9

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Prophethood in Islam

(I) THE CONCEPT OF PROPHETHOOD

A prophet is a person chosen by God as his representative on earth. When God appoints someone as His Messenger, He sends His angel to him to inform him of the new status. In that way, the individual can have no doubts about his appointment as God's apostle. Later, God reveals His message to him through His angels, so that he may communicate the divine teachings to all his fellow men.

God has given man a mind, so that he may be endowed with understanding. But this mind can only grasp things that are apparent. It cannot go below the surface of things, and there are many things that cannot be comprehended by superficial knowledge. The deeper realities of this world remain beyond the scope of the human mind. Where the question of God and the next world are concerned, they must remain invisible forever and forever beyond the reach of human perception.

What the prophet does is to enlighten people, so that they may overcome this human shortcoming. He tells them of the reality of things here and now, and also gives tidings of the next world. He thereby enables the individual to formulate a plan for his entire existence, both on earth and in the life Hereafter. Once the man receives the guidance of God through the prophet, he gains knowledge and awareness, which enable him to carve out a successful life for himself.

Since the time of the first human settlement on earth, there have been many prophets sent by God throughout the ages to convey His messages to human beings. However, whatever records of these ancient prophets have survived have had to be discounted as historically unreliable because of interpolations. The same is true of the books they brought to mankind. The sole exception was the case of the Prophet Muhammad, who had been chosen by God as His Final Messenger. The Prophet was born in an age when the history of the world was already being extensively chronicled. The circumstances were already such that authentic records could be kept

of God's message and the Prophet's exemplary life. The relevant facts were passed on from one generation to the next by both oral and written tradition. With the advent of the printing press came the modern guarantees that no changes would ever be made in the divine scriptures. This makes the position of the Prophet Muhammad as God's Final messenger and His sole representative on earth, till the Doomsday, unassailable.

Adam was the first man as well as the first prophet. But when Adam's people abandoned the ways of the Lord, the Prophet Noah was sent to reform the descendants of Adam. Despite his prolonged efforts, Adam's progeny, with the exception of a very few, resisted Noah's message. Finally, only eight human beings boarded the Ark and were saved by God from the Terrible Flood that destroyed the whole earth. Then the human race made a fresh start, with the followers of Noah, who were saved from the Great Storm. But again this new generation, with the passage of time, digressed from the path of monotheism. This went on, repeatedly, for many centuries. God continued to send prophets one after the other:

'Then We sent Our Messengers in succession. Every time there came to a nation their messenger, they denied him; so We made them follow one another (to destruction), and We made them as lessons for the mankind to learn from them.' (28:44).

But far from showing any willingness to accept their message, people laughed at His apostles: 'Alas for mankind! There never came a Messenger to them but they used to mock at him.' (36:30).

The Prophet Abraham also attempted to reform society, but met the same fate as that of the prophets preceding him. Then God devised a new plan for the divine guidance of human affairs. Accordingly, Abraham was commanded to leave populated areas, go to the desert near where Makkah now stands and settle his wife Hajira and their little child Isma'il there. Initially, Hajira and Isma'il were the only inhabitants of the valley. Abraham himself stayed in Palestine and visited them at certain intervals. In this way, in the hostile and desert environment, a new generation began to be formed. It was finally in this land that the Prophet Muhammad, the Last Prophet, was born. His message was the final message of God to humankind about the religion of Islam or submission to God's will, the best of the religions. God in His mercy willed him to achieve what no other prophet before him could, though there were many who were great kings like Solomon and David. All of them were also very patient and forbearing men, like Yakub, Ayyub, and Yusuf.

Though all the prophets were given a divine message, only four of them were given heavenly books. These books were the Towrah given to Moses,

the Zabur given to David, the Injil given to Isa and the Quran revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The earlier scriptures were not preserved in their authentic and original form. It is only the Quran that exists in exactly the same form as it was revealed. With the establishment of the religion of peace, that is Islam, God's divine arrangement for preparing human beings for eternal life became everlasting and will continue till the Day of Judgement.

In short, it can be said that the concept of prophethood in Islam is a divine arrangement devised by God for the salvation of humankind.

(II) THE ROLE OF THE PROPHETS IN HUMAN SOCIETY

According to one tradition, more than one lakh prophets came to the world. Prophets were those human beings who were selected by God for the communication of His message. These messengers of God were bearers of human values in the full sense of the expression.

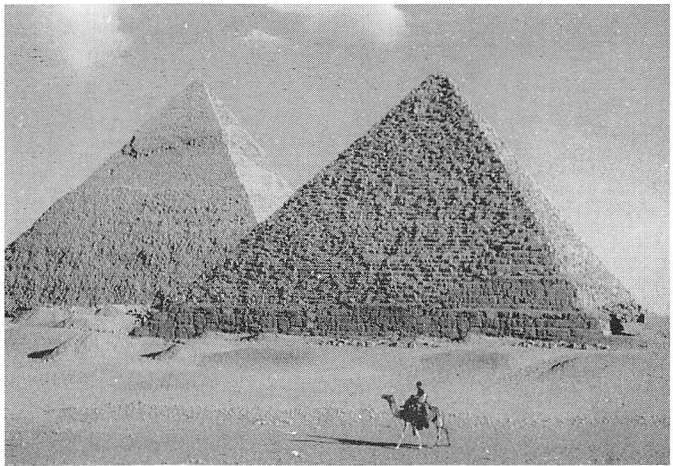
The description of the prophets in the Quran and the Bible shows that one objective of the prophetic mission was to establish a standard of ethics aimed at improving human society.

When man was made to inhabit this world, everything required by him for the fulfilment of his material needs was already in place.

But from the ethical point of view, man did not know the do's and the don'ts. It was the prophets who brought to men the ethical norms of human behaviour. The prophets told them that

their status was far superior to that of any other living creature. The only thing that the animals required was to satisfy their material and physical needs. Man, however, was gifted with an ethical sense. The awareness of justice and injustice had been inculcated in him at the unconscious level. But it was difficult for him to bring it to the conscious level and to establish the system of his life on this basis.

It was with the help of the prophets that he was enabled to rise from the animal level and lead a life as an ethical being. It was the prophets who tried to build human society based on ethics. It is a fact that all the ethical



teachings and values found in this world are the gift of the prophets.

The Prophet Nuh was a great prophet of early times. During his long prophetic career he exhorted people to adopt divine ethics and shun evil ways. He enjoined them to lead their lives as well-wishers of each other.

The prophets advocated social justice, so that everyone should be dealt with fairly and squarely and be given his full due. Social justice also meant wishing others well and treating them as one would want to be treated oneself. There should be no exploit action: each individual of society should be accorded full respect. Each should receive treatment based on principle and not on self-interest.

All the prophets sent to the world in different times and circumstances played the role of improving society. The prophetic mission can be summed up briefly in two words. monotheism and justice.

That is, to believe in one God and base all dealings between people on justice. That is why all the prophets, on the one hand exhorted their people to worship the one and only God and on the other, they strove to improve the moral character of their people, so that they might be of help to others instead of inflicting harm on them.

There were some prophets who were also kings, like Solomon and David, while the Prophet Yusuf held the high official position of being minister to the king of Egypt. All of them used their political power for social welfare.

There was a very severe seven year famine during the times of the Prophet Yusuf, during which time he made such an arrangement for the distribution of grains as was unparalleled in the history of humankind. The people were provided with grains at a very cheap price, and were not discriminated against in this distribution. The details of the lives of these prophet-kings can be found both in the Bible and the Quran.

Jesus laid great stress on moral values and social justice. The New Testament is replete with these teachings. He went to the extent of exhorting his people to love their enemies. That is giving fair treatment unilaterally even to one's enemy. On no pretext should one be unjust and indulge in any action, which creates dissension and corruption in society.

It is as a result of these teachings of Jesus Christ that Christians are engaged in social work more than any other community. It would not be wrong to say that, for the first time in human history, it was the Christian community that gave social work the form of a properly organized social institution, spreading their network of social service all over the world. They became models to be followed by other communities also followed in their footsteps. A notable example was Mother Teresa who earned great fame and was given the Nobel Peace Prize for her selfless services.

The teachings of the Prophet of Islam provide the definitive model for high moral character. From early childhood he possessed exceptional moral

virtues. His honesty was so evident that he earned the title of *al-ameen* (trustworthy) from his compatriots.

One very important aspect of the mission of the Prophet of Islam was to bring a revolution to the world, so that man could lead his life free from all man-made shackles. The society in those days was based on disparity: some were held superior, some inferior. Economic exploitation was common. The system of kingship was not based on justice to all. Only the highly placed could receive justice in this set-up. After a long struggle the Prophet of Islam started a social revolution. The ancient traditional age was brought to an end all over the inhabited world of the time. Prior to the Prophet of Islam nature was held to be an object of worship. The Prophet of Islam, displaced it from its high pedestal and made it a subject of investigation and subjugation. In its wake came the scientific revolution. After a great number of scientific discoveries had been made, the industrial revolution followed. Subsequently, for the first time in human history, it was possible for man to benefit from the divine blessings hidden in nature.

To put an end to economic exploitation the Prophet of Islam forbade the practice of usury and other similar activities.

Then the Prophet of Islam gave equality an absolute status. God was the Lord of all human beings, so all human beings were equal. The difference between master and slave, black and white, rich and poor had no place in this ideology. The concept of the inferior race and the superior race vanished. Good moral character was held to be the only yardstick for judging human beings. This brought the system based on discrimination to an end.

The Prophet of Islam also established a just economic system. It was held obligatory for the believers to spend a part of their income to fulfil the needs of the deprived members of society.

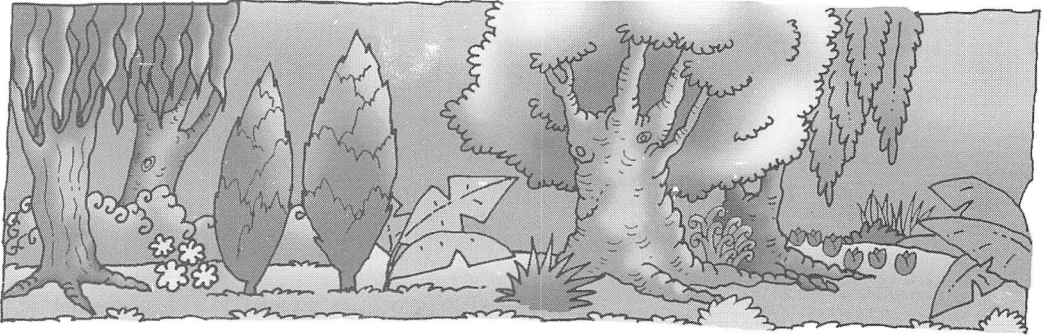
The Prophet of Islam did not just preach these fine theories, but also succeeded in establishing a system on the basis of these principles – a system where there was no political coercion, no economic exploitation, no human inequality. Even the women who had been held inferior to men since ancient times, were given their due status. The Prophet of Islam said that they were halves of men, both complementing one another. Women were also given their share in property. In fact there are traditions, which tell one to look after one's mother far more than one's father.

In this way the Prophet of Islam established in practice an example of the good human society, which the world had been seeking all along.

(III) SOME PROMINENT PROPHETS

(a) The Prophet Adam

God created Adam, the first man, and the father of mankind. He created him out of clay and moulded him into shape (7:12) God gave him good shape and fashioned him in due proportion and created him in the best of moulds (7:11) Then God breathed his spirit into Adam. God's breathing of this spirit means His endowing him with life and consciousness: that is, with a soul.



After the completion of the creation of Adam, God taught him the names or nature of all things. The knowledge of names here denotes man's faculty of conceptual thought. It is by virtue of his ability to think conceptually that man is superior even to the angels.

God endowed Adam, who represented the whole human race, with the ability of conceptual thought, and freedom. He decreed that he would be established on earth, saying that he would inherit the earth. God also told the angels that He had decreed that Adam, a human being would inherit the earth (2:30). The angels replied:

"Lord, will you place on the earth one who will spread corruption and will shed blood? Whereas we sing your praises and sanctify your name."
(2:30).

God replied that He knew what they did not.

Then God in His omnipotence brought the whole human race before Adam and said to the angels: "These are the progeny of Adam. Can you give me the name of each one of them, and say what sort of people they will be?" The angels, having no knowledge of them, were unable to answer. Then God told Adam their names and characteristics, and commanded him to pass the knowledge on to the angels. When Adam had explained to them the nature of the human race, they realized that, besides the wicked and the

corrupt, there would also be among their number great, righteous and pious souls.

Then God ordered the Angels and the Jinn, whom He had created before Adam, to prostrate themselves before him. The angels immediately obeyed the divine commandment. But Satan, chief of the angels, did not prostrate himself. When God asked him to explain his disobedience, he replied, 'I am better than him; you created me from fire, while him you created from mud.' (Quran 7:12). Satan was sentenced by God to everlasting damnation because of his disobedience.

"Satan then asked God to give him respite till Doomsday." God granted his request and made this concession to him.

Satan then said to God, "Now, because You have caused me to go astray, I shall lead human beings astray and I shall turn many of the believers into unbelievers." God said, 'Begone! You stand accursed forever. As for your followers, I will cast them all into Hell.'

Then God created a female companion for Adam called Eve. She became Adam's wife and God settled them in Paradise.

All of Paradise with its vast expanses was now within the reach of Adam and his spouse. It was full of innumerable kinds of good things and they had all the freedom to use them in whatever manner they liked. But in the midst of countless permitted things, there was one thing which they were banned from doing, i.e., they had not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. Satan used this prohibition as a vantage point from which to attack them. He incited them to wrongdoing by saying that this thing from which they had to stay away was the most important thing in paradise. The whole secret of holiness and eternity was hidden therein.

Adam and his wife were influenced by Satan's continuous urging and finally ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. But, when they did this, the result was entirely the opposite of what they had expected. This disobedience of theirs removed the cloak of safety from their bodies. They started to feel absolutely helpless in a world where they had every convenience and total safety.

This indicates the special weapon used by Satan to deceive man into distancing himself from God's Grace and succour. His strategy was to belittle in the eyes of man the extensive world of legitimate gifts from God and to inflate the importance of the few prohibited things, by presenting them in an attractive light, all the while reassuring man of the immense advantages concealed within them.

Then Adam and Eve realised that they had committed a great sin, and that Allah was angry with them. They sincerely repented saying, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and do not show us

mercy, we shall be doomed for ever.” Then God turned to them mercifully, choosing to bestow His Grace upon them and give them guidance.

Adam and his wife were commanded by God to descend from Paradise and settle on earth and to follow the guidance to be sent by God. God bestowed His grace on Adam’s descendants. (3:33).

God commanded them to do good deeds and prove themselves His obedient servants so that they might be held deserving of Eternal Paradise after death. This is the advice for all human beings. If a person does not follow the right path shown by God, he becomes the follower of Satan and will be thrown into the fire of Hell.

Thus Adam was the first man and the first prophet on the earth.

(b) The Prophet Nuh

The Prophet Nuh was chosen by God to communicate to mankind, His message with which Adam had earlier been entrusted. But as the people over the ages forgot the message of the first prophet and strayed from the straight path, God, in His mercy, gave humankind another chance to repent. As there were still some good people left on earth, He sent another prophet to teach them the Truth. He told Nuh to go to His erring people with His message, and guide them about what was good and what was bad.

Nuh went to his own people to tell them of the duty, which God – the Creator of the heavens and earth – had given him to carry out. He tried hard to give them advice, but no one, neither the rich nor the poor, listened to him. Rather, the chiefs of the tribe challenged him, saying to their people:

‘He is no more than a human being like you, but he seeks to make himself superior to you. Had Allah willed, He surely could have sent down angels.’ (23:24)

And though he argued with them and tried to convince them of the truth of his message, they refused to listen to him or stop worshipping the idols. His words, pointing to the wonders of the universe created by God as the sure sign of His existence, made no impression on them and they persisted in their ways.

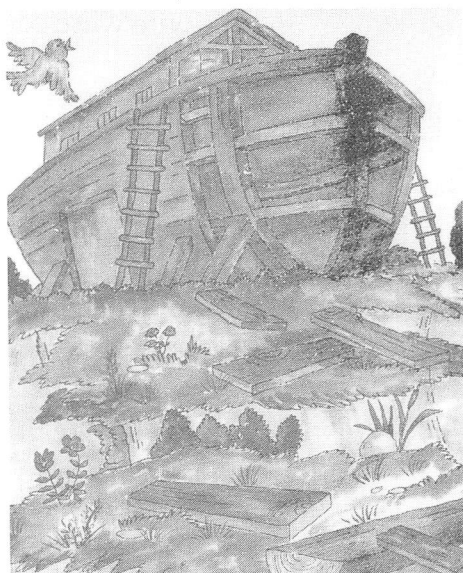
After years of hardship and untiring effort, Nuh still did his best to bring them to the path of God, telling them:

‘He (Allah) will forgive you your sins and give you respite for an appointed term.’ (71:4).

But they plotted against him and threatened to have him stoned to death. In great distress, Nuh prayed to his Lord: ‘My Lord! Do not leave a single disbeliever on the earth! If You leave them, they will mislead Your servants, and they will beget none but wicked disbelievers. My Lord! Forgive me,

and my parents, and him who enters my home as a believer, and all the believing men and women.” (71:26-28). And God heard his prayers.

Then God revealed to Nuh that He had decided to send to the earth a terrible flood that would destroy everyone and every thing upon it. He also told him that the punishment would be everlasting. Only Nuh and his followers would, by the grace of God, be saved. At the same time, God ordered Nuh to build an Ark or a ship and to collect pairs (male and female) of every living species to put in the Ark at the time of Flood. He not only ordered Nuh to build the Ark but gave him detailed instructions about how to do it. The Quran describes this in the following words: ‘We revealed Our will to him, saying: ‘Build an ark under Our watchful eye, according to Our instructions. When Our judgement comes to pass and water wells out from the Oven, take aboard a pair from every species and the members of your household, except those of them already doomed. Do not plead with Me for those who have done wrong: They shall be drowned. And when you and all your followers have gone aboard, say:



‘Praise be to God who has delivered us from a sinful nation. Lord, let my landing from this ark be blessed. You alone can make me land safely.’
(23:27-29)

Only those who believed in the message of the prophet Nuh followed him into the ship. One of his sons and his own wife, Waiya, who did not believe his words, were left behind. And as God’s scourge descended on the earth, rain poured down and did not stop till the whole world was submerged in water. But the people and animals in the Ark were safe from God’s punishment. Everybody perished, even Canan, one of the sons of the prophet, for he was amongst those who denied the call of God. Nuh could not contain his grief, so he called out to the Lord to save his son, but God replied: ‘He was no kinsman of yours: he had acted unjustly.’ And Nuh repented of having sinned by asking for mercy for an unbeliever, though he be his own flesh and blood. This shows that the closest tie between people is faith, and not even family or race.

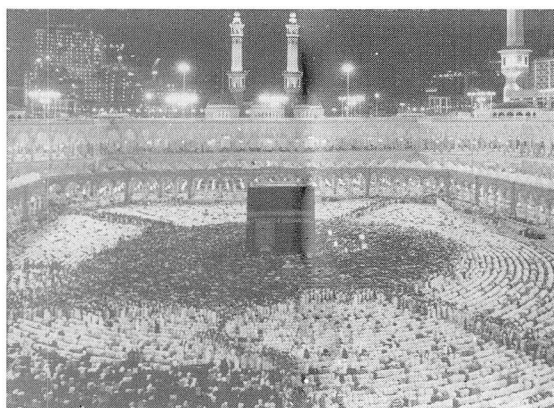
Finally the Ark came to rest on a mountain and slowly the waters receded, and the people and the animals disembarked. In this way God led the Prophet

Nuh and his people to safety and He made the Flood and the Ark signs of warning for future generations.

The life of the Prophet Nuh was not different from the life of many other prophets, as he too was persecuted by his own people. His followers were few in number but finally it was they who were, through the mercy of God, saved from the Flood and eternal punishment. But the message of God is constantly the same; it is a call to accept the Truth, a call repeated by every prophet and showing God's unending mercy to mankind.

(c) The Prophet Ibrahim

The Prophet Ibrahim, through the line of his son Ismail, was an ancestor of the Prophet Muhammad. Both Ibrahim and his son Ismail were messengers of God and together they rebuilt the Kabah in Makkah. Ibrahim established the pilgrimage to Makkah by calling mankind to the House of God. Ibrahim was tried by certain of God's commands which he fulfilled, and was made



a leader of mankind. While laying the foundations of the Kabah, Ibrahim and Ismail prayed to God to accept their service, and to make them and their progeny Muslim. They further extended their thanksgiving and prayed to be fed with fruits. They also prayed for Makkah to be made a city of peace and security and for an to be sent Apostle from amongst them. Chosen by God as a leader for mankind, Ibrahim was granted God's mercy and high honour. Acknowledging all this, Ibrahim showed his gratitude to God, the Almighty, and God continued guiding him to the straight path through revelation.

Ibrahim argued with his father about the evils of polytheism and urged him to give up idol-worship. But the latter rejected his advice and threatened to have him stoned to death. Ibrahim nevertheless broke the idols, and so he was thrown into a blazing fire. By God's intervention the fire was cooled and Ibrahim was saved.

Then God commanded Ibrahim to migrate with his nephew, Lut, to the blessed land. Ibrahim prayed for the grant of a righteous son and his prayer was accepted. Ibrahim was tried by God commanding him to sacrifice his eldest son, Ismail. When Ibrahim told his son about this dream the latter replied. 'O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me steadfast and obedient to God.' Ibrahim then laid his son face down for the sacrifice.

At that moment God called out to Ibrahim that he had already fulfilled His command. It had been a great trial of Ibrahim's intention and God accepted this as his sacrifice. Then God sent a ram to be sacrificed instead.

The Prophet Ibrahim set a great example for the Muslims to follow. They must be ever willing to sacrifice everything for the cause of God, for everything we possess is given to us by God.

The Prophet Ibrahim set an unparalleled example of complete submission and devotion to God. It meant a complete abnegation of his will in obedience to God's command.

The literal meaning of Islam is to submit oneself to complete obedience and devotion to God. That is why this complete obedience and devotion of Ibrahim and Ismail to God has been termed 'Islam' in the Quran:

"When they both submitted (aslama) their with (to God) and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice) (Al-Saffat 103).

The Prophet Ibrahim decided to leave the country and go to some other land to preach the revealed message of God and call the people to the right path. He left his home and travelled to Jordan, Palestine, Syria, and Egypt. He also visited for Hijaz to carry out his *da'wah* mission. And he went on like this going from place to place, calling people towards God.

A son was born to the Prophet Ibrahim in his old age. God commanded him to leave his new-born son named Ismail and his mother Hajra in the barren land where Makkah now stands. Ibrahim immediately complied with this injunction and left his wife and son at the place where the Kabah was later built.

When Ismail grew up, the Prophet Ibrahim had a dream in which he was sacrificing his son, Ismail. The dreams of the prophets are never false. He at once understood the meaning of this dream. He related the dream to his son. Being an obedient son, Ismail took no time in understanding the will of God. He said willingly,

"Father do what you have been commanded to do. If Allah has willed so, you will find me among those who are patient and submissive."

So he bowed to the command of God, and prepared himself to give his life if that pleased his Lord. Ibrahim laid his son face down on the earth to sacrifice him. This shows that Ibrahim regarded nothing dearer to himself than his Lord's Command. The Lord accepted his sacrifice and declared:

'You have indeed proved your dream to be true. Truly, we reward the righteous person. Truly, it was an open trial, and We sent the ram to be sacrificed in place of your son.'

As the Prophet Ibrahim opened his eyes, he found a ram standing there ready for the sacrifice.

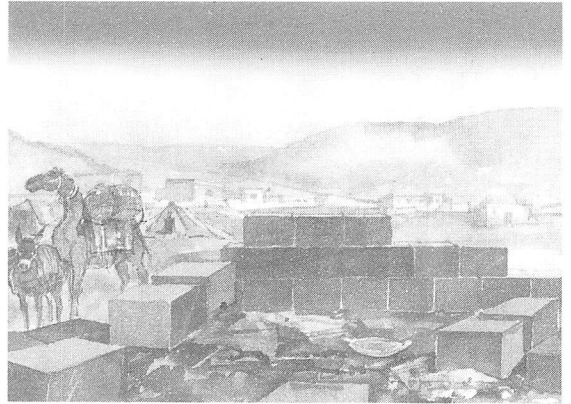
In memory of this great event God commanded all Muslims to offer sacrifices on the 10th of Dul Hijjah every year.

Ibrahim emerged successfully from every test. He had even been prepared to sacrifice his dearest son. That is why God called him Khalilullah (Allah's friend). Allah also made him a leader and guide for all human beings. So when God said to the Prophet Ibrahim, We make you leader of the world, Ibrahim said,

'O my God, are You giving this high place to my children also? This does not apply to those who go on the wrong path.'

Then God commanded Ibrahim to build the Kabah as a centre for the Muslims the world over.

'Kabah' is the name of God's house of worship in Makkah. This is the centre of Islam (monotheism) for all time to come. The Prophet Ibrahim with the help of his son Ismail started building the Kabah. While raising the walls of the Kabah, the Prophet Ibrahim



and his son Ismail prayed thus to their Lord: "O our Lord, accept our efforts. Only You are the hearer of our prayers and only You are the knower of everything, our Lord. Make both of us true Muslims. Raise from among our children such people as act solely upon Your command. Teach us the ways of Your worship and accept our repentance. Pardon all our mistakes and sins. You are kind and merciful."

When the building of the Kabah was completed, Ibrahim prayed to God:

"O Lord, I brought some of my dear ones to settle in this barren Land. Our God, with Your infinite bounty, make this place a city of peace. Our Lord, protect me and my children from idol worship."

Then Allah commanded this prophet to keep the Kabah pure and clean and free of idols. 'This house is the centre of worship of one God alone.... for those who visit it, circumambulate it, bow and prostrate yourselves to Me.' So the Prophet Ibrahim carried out the command of God and made the Kabah the greatest centre of monotheism. The Prophet Ibrahim's life presents the best example of total submission to God. He was ready to carry out his Lord's commands and passed his life as a humble servant of the Creator of the world.

After Ibrahim, a number of prophets were sent to the world – Ismail, Al-Yasa, Yunus and Lut. They were granted by God the favour of revelation.

They were truthful and righteous . Ibrahim used to enjoin on his people prayer and charity. Ismail, Idris and Dhul Kifl were all men of constancy and patience. And Allah admitted them to His mercy, for they were of the righteous ones.

Ismail was ready to suffer patiently in the cause of God. Al Yasa and Dhul Kifl, all of them were the best chosen. Ibrahim impressed it upon his sons, Ismail and Ishaaq, that God had chosen the religion of Islam for them, and that they should not die except as Muslims. And the same advice was given by Yaqoob to his sons.

(d) The Prophet Musa

The followers of the Prophet Yaqub, also known as Israil, were called the Banu Israil (Israelites). They had gone on living in Egypt since the days of the Prophet Yusuf.

Musa was born in Egypt 450 years after the days of Yusuf. At that time Egypt was ruled by the Pharaohs.

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, treated the Israelites harshly. He feared that these 'foreigners,' who were former rulers, might grow in number and become powerful enough to overthrow his kingship. So he took every step to crush them. Rameses II went to the extent of giving orders to kill every male child born to them.

Musa was born during this critical time. His mother, therefore concealed him for three months. Then, by divine inspiration, she put the baby into a basket and floated it in the river. She asked Maryam, Musa's sister to watch it from a distance to avoid suspicion.

The basket was picked up by Pharaoh's men, who took the baby to Pharaoh's wife. She was very glad to have the lovely baby and adopted him. Musa's sister went to Pharaoh's palace and suggested a nurse to look after the baby and suckle him. She was asked to bring her to the palace. Musa's own mother was thus engaged as his nurse. In this way Musa was brought up in the royal palace, where he received the best training. Later, Allah granted him prophethood and bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge. Musa and his brother Harun were guided to the straight path (37:118).

One day Musa came across an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite. Musa gave the Egyptian a blow, which resulted in his death. After this inadvertent killing, Musa had to leave the city. He went to Madyan, where he stayed for a period of ten years. Then he moved on to Tuwa, a valley at the foot of Mount Sinai. He was travelling with his family when he saw a fire in the direction of Mount Tur. Here he received divine guidance and was selected as a messenger of God.

Musa was granted two signs, a 'rod' which, when thrown down would turn into a living serpent, and the ability to make his hand shine after it was drawn out from under his arm (20:17-22)

God commanded him to go to Pharaoh and urge him to worship the one God. Musa asked God to make his brother Harun his helper and God granted his prayer.

Musa and Harun then went to the Pharaoh. They exhorted him to obey God and allow the Israelites to leave his country. Pharaoh defied him and called him a liar and a sorcerer. Pharaoh summoned his own sorcerers for a contest. His magicians were badly defeated, and bowing to the truth, they professed their faith in God.

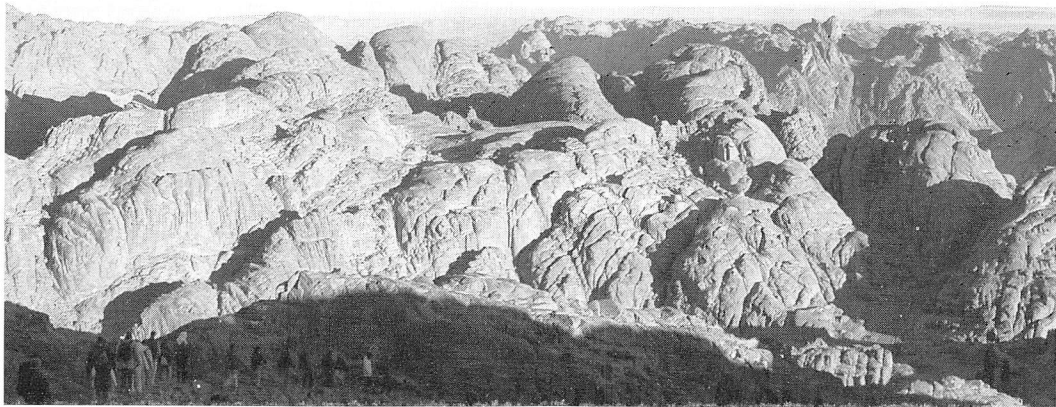
Pharaoh became angry and intensified his cruel treatment of the Israelites. Therefore, God commanded Musa to leave Egypt with the Israelites, at night to avoid arousing Pharaoh's suspicion. But the Egyptians came to know of their plan and so Pharaoh and his soldiers chased them, almost catching them near the shore of the Red Sea. Now there was no way to flee. Then God commanded Musa to throw his rod to the water. When he did so, the mighty sea parted, making a path in the middle for the Israelites to cross over. Pharaoh and his soldiers went in hot pursuit of them, but Musa and his people safely reached the opposite shore. While Pharaoh and his forces were still in the middle of the sea, the water on both sides suddenly began to pour over them and they were drowned. This is how God punishes transgressors and helps his servants.

When the Israelites crossed the northern end of the Red Sea, they reached the Sinai Peninsula. During this journey, they saw a community engaged in idol worship. Musa said to them: 'All your devotion is going to be wasted.' The greatest weakness of man is to attach importance to appearance, thus becoming unable to devote his attention to the Invisible God.

The Israelites were given superiority over all mankind. This superiority was not meant in the racial sense but was relevant rather to their mission. It is the way of God that he selects a community to become the bearer of the Book of God and, through this community He conveys His message to other nations. In ancient times this office was held by the Israelites, but after the coming of the Final Prophet, this office was given to the Muslim community.

Musa was given commands concerning *dawah* in Egypt, but the laws (shariah) were communicated to him after he reached the Sinai desert.

Musa received his first prophetic call on a mountainside. The next time he was again called to a mountain, (Mount Sinai) to receive the commands of the Torah. This shows that the environment of nature is the best place for receiving divine inspiration. In the quiet world of the trees, mountains and rivers, one begins to feel oneself closer to God.



There was a clever man named Samiri among the Israelites. When Musa left for the mountain, leaving his people in the care of Harun, Samiri started misleading them. He collected pieces of jewellery from the people and moulded them into the shape of a calf. The sculpting art of the ancient Egyptians was such that when air passed through the calf, a bellowing sound came out of its mouth. People are generally awed by strange things, so this "miracle" of the calf led them to believe that there was something sacred about it and they began worshipping it. A large number of people were misled by Samiri's eloquence. Except for Harun and a few of his companions nobody dared to openly protest against him.

When Musa came down from the mountain and saw the Israelites worshipping the golden calf, he held Harun responsible for this, under the impression that he had neglected his duty as a reformer.

Musa became very angry with Harun. But when Harun told him that he had done all he could to show his people the right path, but to no avail, then Musa forgave him and started praying to God for him.

Musa spent forty nights on the mountain top. God revealed His law and gave him the tablets of stone inscribed with divine rules to be followed by the believers. Here, on Mount Sinai, Musa was given the Ten Commandments and the law. Musa requested God to show Himself to him, so God manifested His glory on Mount Tur. When the Lord revealed His Glory to the mountain, it crumbled to dust and Musa swooned (7:142-145). "Glory be to you!" Musa exclaimed when he had regained his senses. "Accept my repentance. I am the first to believe."

God accepted the Prophet Musa's repentance:

"Musa, I have chosen you of all mankind to make known my messages and My commandments. Take, therefore, what I have given you and be thankful." (7:144)

Musa took the stone tablets and went back down to the camp to communicate the divine laws to the Children of Israel.

The sacred book given to Musa is called the Taurat. It contained a pledge of guidance and mercy to those that fear their Lord. (7:150-154).

We inscribed for him upon the Tablets all manner of precepts, and instructions concerning all things, and said to him:

“Observe these steadfastly, and enjoin your people to observe what is best in them.” (7:142-144)

Musa and Harun were Allah’s believing servants (37:122) on whom be peace and salutation. (37:120)

Zakariya, Yahya, Isa and Ilyas, all in the ranks of the righteous, were Allah’s believing servants and apostles (37:12:3). They asked their people to fear God and worship Him alone, but the people rejected them.

(e) The Prophet Dawood

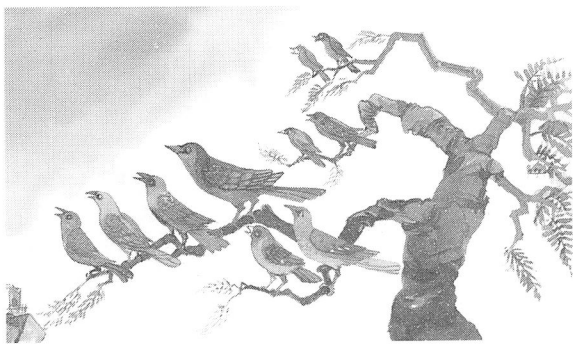
Prophet David was born in Bethlehem. He belonged to the tribe of Judah of the Bani Israil. He is regarded in Jewish traditions as the ideal king, the founder of a vast and powerful state for the Bani Israil. For ancient Israel his role was second only to that of Musa.

David began his career at the court of Saul, Israel’s first king. The most urgent task before Saul was to crush the enemies of the Bani Israil, in particular the Amalikites. The Amalikites were led by Goliath, the giant warrior. The Israelis were so frightened of him that they refused to fight against his forces. However, finally they decided to fight the Amalikites till the last breath.

Goliath came to the battlefield and challenged the Israelites to face him, but they did not dare to come forward. At this juncture, David, still in his teens, rushed towards Goliath and killed him in a few minutes. Israel’s fate changed overnight and David became the hero of his nation. This brave boy was granted prophethood by God.

Saul was so greatly impressed by his skill and bravery that he gave him his daughter Michal in marriage. With the help of David (Dawood), Saul conquered Palestine and ruled there for 16 years from 1020 B.C. to 1004 B.C. He appointed David as his successor. He became the king of the Israelis in Palestine in 1004 BC.

Along with strength and wisdom God also granted David a sweet and melodious voice. He received the Psalms from God. The Psalms are one of the four scriptures that are mentioned in the Quran. When David sang these hymns in his melodious voice, all the valleys and mountains echoed with the sound. The birds too sang God’s praises along with the Prophet David. He used to offer his prayers to God with such superior eloquence that even



the mountains and birds would join him.

When a believer who is fully absorbed in the remembrance of God recites the praises of God, he is in fact in consonance with the entire universe; all things in heaven and on the earth join him in chorus, albeit in silent language. But Almighty God had

blessed David in such a special way, that the hills, mountains and birds used to join him audibly when he recited the praises of God.

Similarly, Almighty God had given David the skills to make use of iron. He developed the technique of melting and moulding iron to such an extent that he could make the very fine links of which chain mail is composed. The suits of armour made from this could be worn like ordinary clothes. At that time, this technique was unknown to the world. Almighty God Himself willed that he be taught this technique through the agency of the angels.

Almighty God had blessed him with extraordinary strength and a strong empire, but he always turned to God in matters. He used to sit on a mountainside and sing songs in praise of God with such great devotion that the whole environment would seem to join with him. The Quran says:

'The hills sing the praises of God with him.' (21:78).

God had blessed Dawood with a very strong empire. The secret of the strength was wisdom and decisive speech (38:20). He had the ability to take the right decisions at the right times. These are the things that make a ruler effective. Such a ruler does not decide matters according to his whims and fancies, but abides by the principles of truth and justice.

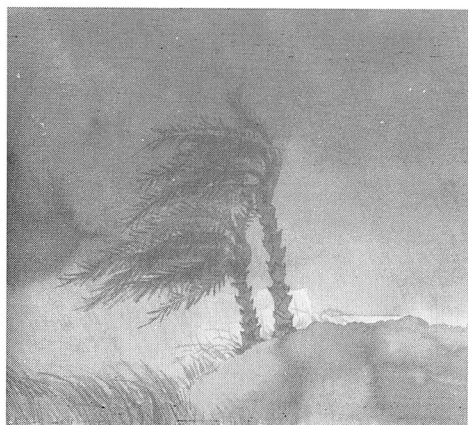
David was a grateful servant of God. He praised God for granting him great knowledge and favouring him over many of His servants.

Allah bestowed His grace on David and commanded him to work with righteousness. His family too was commanded to give thanks to Allah. David was a man of strength and always turned to God.

(f) The Prophet Solomon

Solomon was the youngest son of David, the prophet king of the children of Israel. Solomon succeeded David as prophet and king. His reign extended from 965 B.C. to 926 B.C. Thus, he ruled for about forty years. His empire was spread over an area reaching from Palestine to Transjordan. God revealed His message to Solomon. He was granted knowledge and wisdom. God bestowed upon him and David the capability to settle human problems

and take right decisions in judging all matters. God had given Solomon many different kinds of knowledge. Moreover, he was blessed with many things by way of miracles, for example he understood the language of the birds. He could train them and use them for sending messages, etc. Solomon enjoyed extraordinary superiority over his contemporaries. But this superiority only created a feeling of humility in him. Whatever he had, he considered to be a direct gift of God in His manifest grace (27:16).



God even tamed the winds for him (21:81). The taming of winds meant that the seas became navigable. Indeed, in ancient times ocean travel was revolutionized when man invented ships with sails, which were a means of harnessing the winds; sails performed the function of engines for the ships of those days. An important aspect of the invention of ships with sails was that it made the oceans usable for large-scale transport. This gives an indication that man was taught the science of navigation

on the seas through the prophets.

Besides this, a group of Jinn was made subservient to Solomon. They used to execute for him large welfare projects, which could not be done by ordinary men. In the modern machine age, such enormous tasks are performed by machines. Before the machine age, in order to facilitate the carrying out of major projects, God had made the Jinn subordinate to His prophets.

In Solomon's army there were not only human beings but also genes and birds. Once Solomon's army passed through a valley where there were innumerable ants. The talk among the ants on this occasion was understood by Solomon.

Such an incident should have been enough to make an ordinary man conceited and proud. But Solomon became the embodiment of gratitude on this account. Whatever was his to all appearances, he fully attributed to God---and this is the way of a pious and righteous man.

The Sabeans were a wealthy community of ancient times. (11 B.C. to 115B.C.) Its centre was Ma'arib (Yemen), where its grand ruins are still in existence. During Solomon's period, this area was under the rule of a woman called Bilquees (Sheba). The people of this place used to worship the sun, Satan having taught them that the only thing worth worshipping was whatever was most prominent. As the sun was the most prominent of all visible things, only the sun deserved to be considered a god and worshipped.

Solomon, received detailed information about the Sabeans through the hoopoe. This hoopoe perhaps belonged to Solomon's army of birds and possibly received regular training.

Solomon's power and empire were the gifts of God. Similarly, the manner in which he dealt with the Kingdom of Sabeans was also at the will of God. Shah Abdul Quader (of Delhi) writes in connection with verse 37: "No other prophet spoke like this. Solomon had the force of God Almighty's empire behind him, so he spoke like this."

Bilquees, the Queen of Saba viewed the matter quite realistically. She realised that if she resisted the might of Solomon, there was a strong possibility of her being defeated and then her nation would be treated as every vanquished nation is treated by a victorious nation. On the contrary, she thought, she would be saved if she surrendered. However, the queen pursued the course of sending gifts to him by way of initial feelers, so that she might know whether Solomon was attracted by wealth or whether, beyond that, he had any other demand based on some principle.

In comparison with the invaluable wealth which Solomon had received in the shape of prophethood and the realisation of God, every other kind of wealth was worthless in his eyes. So, when gifts of gold and silver were presented to him on behalf of the Queen of Saba, he did not even look at them.

Solomon, by his conduct, gave the impression to the emissaries of the Queen of Saba that his concern was that of principle and not of self-interest. The Qur'anic commentator Ibn-e-Kathir, by way of explanation presents Solomon's point of view:

"Do you want to influence me with your wealth so that I should let you off along with your polytheism and allow you to keep your kingdom?"

Though Solomon was endowed with extraordinary power, he planned to subjugate the Sabean people by demonstrating his power rather than by using it. So, he arranged to have the Queen's throne shifted from her palace in Ma'arib to Jerusalem (Palestine), through one of his special emissaries. This incident of having the throne brought to him probably occurred when, on the return of the presents, the Queen of Saba started out from Yemen for Palestine, so that she could reach Solomon's court and have direct talks with him. The queen's journey attended by pomp and glory must have started after the return of her envoys who presumably described the magnificence of Solomon's court and repeated to her his utterances, which testified to his lofty character.



The distance between Ma'arib and Jerusalem is about fifteen hundred miles. This long distance was covered in such a way that no sooner had the words of command fallen from Solomon's lips than the jewel-studded throne was there before him. In spite of this extraordinary power, he had no feelings of pride. He remained the embodiment of modesty and kept bowing down before God.

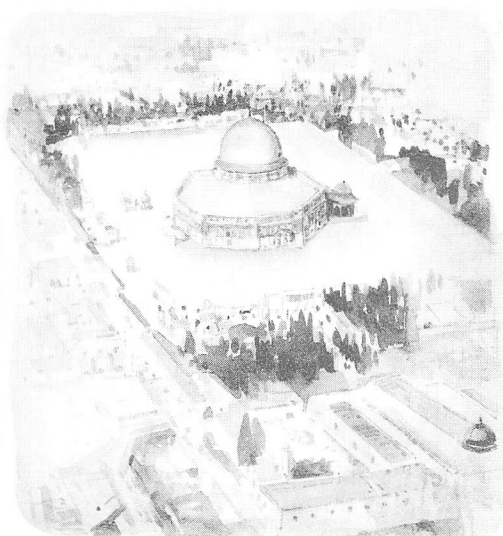
The Queen of Saba, having set forth from her country, reached Bait ul Maqdis. When she entered Solomon's palace, the throne was brought before her, without her being told anything about it, and she was asked whether it was her throne. When she saw it, she was wonder-struck at God's powers. This throne, which she had kept safe in her palace in Ma'arib, had mysteriously traversed a distance of fifteen hundred miles and reached Bait ul-Maqdis.

After entering Solomon's palace, the Queen of Saba reached an area whose floor was made of thick, transparent glass slabs with water flowing beneath them. When the queen reached this point, she suddenly felt that there was a pool of water before her. At that time she did what anyone stepping into the water does, i.e. she involuntarily pulled up her skirt.

In this way she was made to see in a practical way how one is deceived by outward appearances, the inner real fact often being different from what meets the eye. Man starts worshipping the sun and moon because of their prominence, but the real God is beyond these visible phenomena.

The Queen of Saba had so far been worshipping the sun under the influence of her national conventions. But, in the company of Solomon, whatever she heard and saw, completely banished from her mind all impressions of the majesty of anything other than God. Consequently, she renounced the religion of polytheism and whole-heartedly embraced the religion of monotheism.

According to the commentators, Solomon, perceiving that his end was near had prayed to God that his death might be concealed from the jinns, who were constructing the Temple at Jerusalem till they had entirely finished the edifice. In fulfilment of this prayer, He died as he stood at his prayers, leaning on his staff, which supported the body in that posture a full year, by which time the temple became completed. And it was then that the fact of his death was revealed by the white ants gnawing his staff.



When it was time for Solomon to die, he was leaning on a stick and having some constructive work done by “jinn”. The angel of death took away his life-spirit, but his lifeless body, with the support of the stick remained upright. The Jinn continued with their work under the impression that he was nearby supervising the work. Then some white ants infested the stick. After some time, when the white ants had made the stick hollow, his body fell to the ground. At that time only the Jinn came to know that he had died.

This incident had taken place in this manner most probably with a view to eradicating the erroneous popular belief that the Jinn had knowledge of the future.

Solomon enjoyed extraordinary superiority over his contemporaries. But his superiority only created a feeling of humility in him. Whatever he had he considered the direct gift of God.

(g) The Prophet Isa

The Birth and Life of Isa

The Banu Israil, or the Jews, were the chosen people of the Lord and were granted many favours by Him. However, they violated the Lord’s orders and refused to obey the prophets, so the Lord, the Merciful, once again sent a prophet to bring them to the right path. This prophet was Isa, son of Maryam.

Isa (or Jesus, as he is called by the Christians in English) was born in 4 B.C. This birth was miraculous as he had been born to the virgin Mary, without a father, by the Lord’s command (13:17-21).

Isa’s virgin mother, Maryam, had been pledged even before her birth, by her own mother, to the service of the Lord and as a small girl had been sent to Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem, the highest temple of the Jews. There, she kept herself in retirement (*i’tikaf*) and occupied herself with worship. One day she saw in front of her a strong man and she became afraid. But he said he was an angel sent by God and a messenger of the Lord, who came to give her the good news, that through God’s command, she would bear a child.

Maryam, an unmarried girl, belonging to religious family, and a virgin, left the temple and went to a faraway place (Bethlehem or Bait ul Lehem) (19:22-23) for she was stricken with shame. There, under a date palm and near a spring, Isa was born (19:24-26) to her. Then Maryam returned



to her own people with her new-born child in her lap. It was the infant Isa himself who told the people that he was a servant of Allah. He told them that Allah was his Lord and that they should worship Him. (19:29-33).

Isa's miraculous birth and his testimony that he was a servant of Allah are attested to in the Quran, which also clearly refutes the Christian belief that he was the son of God (3:54).

God sent Isa as a clear sign of His will, gave him miraculous powers and strengthened him with the holy spirit.

The gift of performing miracles was bestowed upon him by God so that, through these miraculous acts, people might recognise him as a true prophet of God and have faith in him. But this was not to be. Isa's early disciples saw him merely as a human being and prophet of God. (5:77-78). Later followers (today called Christians), believed, however, that he was not only the son of God but that God was incarnate in him.

Isa was blessed by God with the miraculous power to bring dead men to life by blowing his breath into them. Such miraculous powers were, in fact, a sign of God, which was displayed in order to demonstrate the possibility of life after death. But people like the Jews did not learn any lesson from it. On the contrary, orthodox Jews opposed him while his own followers soon began treating him as a superman and started worshipping him as the son of God and also as God. If these miracles had been treated as signs of God, they could have been a tremendous source of guidance. But as humankind failed to take them as signs of God, they were lead astray.

Besides bringing dead men to life, Isa performed many other miracles. He made clay figures of birds and by breathing into them, turned them into real birds, which flew away once given life. By God's leave, he gave sight to those born blind and healed the lepers. (3:49)

The Jews, who did not believe in him, accused him of practicing magic. They plotted against him and wanted to crucify him, but Allah saved him from this death (4:157) and raised him to heaven (4:158). Thus, contrary to Christian belief, Isa was not crucified at all.

Healing and Preaching

Jesus began his preaching after the age of 30, and he also worked miracles. People began to come in hordes to hear him preach. These people were mostly from the common and lower sections of society. The oppressed and the downtrodden, the sick and the blind came to him for liberation and salvation. Jesus healed the sick and also saved their souls. He spoke in the language of the people, and taught them with the help of parables, so that even the lowest of the low could understand him and take lessons from his words.

Jesus selected 12 disciples from different backgrounds to help him in

his mission. These 12 disciples followed him wherever he went, moving from one town to another, from one village to the next, in order to preach, heal and guide the people, and set them free from the bondage of sin and strife.

He also taught the people to love one another, and prepare for the kingdom of heaven, as nobody would live for ever on this earth, and all would have to go back to the Creator. Therefore, one should repent of one's misdeeds, accept the Lord in one's heart, and lead a life of goodness and piety, and, in the name of God, devote oneself to the service of others.

Jesus also preached against the accumulation of wealth on this earth. He said that the earth and all its wealth would pass away, but that the word of God would be eternal. Therefore, men should not set their hearts on these worldly things, but instead work towards the attainment of forgiveness, and devote themselves to the cause of spreading the message of God's love to everyone on this earth.

Jesus also said that it was the duty of everyone in this world, to impart this message of love to all of mankind. After we die in this world, we will be accountable for our actions, and we will have to answer to God for not having fulfilled our duties.

Jesus also taught the people to pray without ceasing and to have faith in God alone, so he became very popular among the common men. For this reason, the Jewish clergy started feeling threatened by his preaching, and by his miraculous works. They therefore set out to stop him from becoming too popular. Jesus associated himself with the downtrodden and the ostracized classes. He ate in their houses and even gave respect to women. During those days, women were not considered to be on a par with men, and were not accorded the respect and status of today. Jesus treated them equally, and intervened in favour of sinners, so that they might be given another chance to lead respectable lives.

The Jewish priestly class did not like his interference, and was always on the look-out for a way to arrest him on charges of disrespect to the laws of Moses. His radical views concerning the observance of sabbath (the day of rest) also attracted many controversies, as well as his interpretation of the teaching in the old Scriptures.

He was against such rigid laws as made men heartless, and filled them with pride. He taught humility, and advocated just actions. He stressed the importance of inner purity rather than any outward show of religiosity. This was very much against the priestly class, who, in the mere observation of rules and regulations, considered themselves pious, and were thus filled with a sense of self-righteousness.

Thus, the opposition, which comprised mainly of the priestly class, began to think of a way to put a stop to all the activities of Jesus. They

charged him with promoting sinners, and of trying to gain a political standing. They went to the governor of Judea, Pilate. They charged Jesus with blasphemy and presented him as a potential political rival. The governor did not feel threatened by Jesus, but as the majority of his supporters were against Jesus, and in favour of putting him to death, he could do nothing to prevent them from doing so. However, God Almighty saved him, as we learn from the Quran.

Jesus taught men to love one another, as one would love oneself. To do good to all, and return good for evil.

He taught patience, and acceptance of God's will, as everything comes from God, and one should be contented with everything one receives. He also taught mankind to forgive one another, as God forgives us our many sins; to renounce the pleasures and wealth of this world, as everything on this earth will pass away, except the kingdom of God. Therefore, man should do good deeds, help the poor and needy, and be ready for the day on which God will pass His final judgement on the basis of men's good and bad deeds.

(h) The Prophet Yusuf

The Prophet Yusuf, the son of the Prophet Yaqub, was of the chosen ones of God. He was granted wisdom and knowledge and was taught the interpretation of dreams.

Yusuf's story has been described as the most beautiful of stories in the Quran. (Chapter 12)

Yaqub had twelve sons. Of these twelve sons, two, Yusuf and Bin Yameen, were from one mother, and the other ten were their stepbrothers. From his childhood, Yusuf was handsome, intelligent and obedient. The stepbrothers were selfish and quarrelsome. They became jealous of Yusuf because the father loved him more than the others.

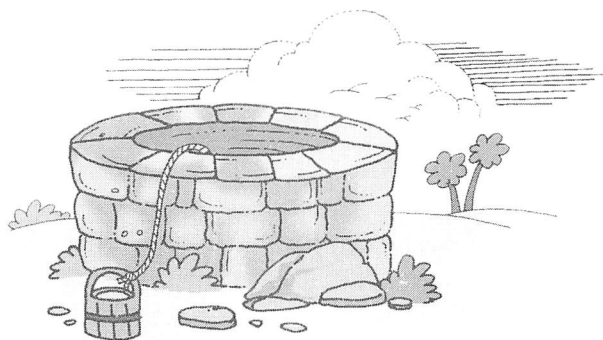
When Yusuf was 17 years old, he had a strange dream that eleven stars, the sun and the moon were prostrating themselves before him. On hearing about this dream, Yaqub said that it meant that his Lord would choose him to carry out His tasks. He will make you His apostle and grant him wisdom and understanding.

After this dream, the Prophet Yaqub began paying more attention to Yusuf. The stepbrothers became very angry. They thought of an evil plan to get rid of Yusuf. They discussed the matter amongst themselves and finally hatched a plot to throw him into a dark well in a far-off-forest. (As it happened, some passing caravan would take him out of the well and carry him away.)

They managed to persuade Yaqub to allow them to take Yusuf for an outing. While playing they went further and further into the forest where they found a dark well. So they threw Yusuf down into it. God instilled

peace in his mind and he received inspiration from his Lord that he would receive divine succour and one day he would be so high in rank that his brothers would not even recognize him.

The brothers went home and told their father that a wolf had eaten him. They produced his shirt soaked with goat's blood as evidence. The shirt was blood-stained but was not torn anywhere. Yaquub refused to accept the concocted story. He said to his sons: "If the wolf had eaten him, it would have torn his shirt as well."



He was very distressed and shocked. He cried: "Your souls have tempted you to evil. Sweet patience! (*sabr janil*) Allah alone can help me to bear the loss." Yaqoob was confident that Yusuf must be alive somewhere and that Allah had very likely chosen him for some more noble destiny.

Joseph remained in the dark well hungry and thirsty for about three days. In the meantime a caravan bound for Egypt passed by. A water carrier was sent to the well to draw some water for the animals and the travellers. As he lowered the bucket into the well to draw out water, he was amazed to see a boy standing at the bottom of the well. He shouted to his companions: "Good news to all of you, I have found a boy at the bottom of the well." Then they pulled him out of the well. They hid him among their merchandise so that they could sell him as a slave.

When the caravan arrived in Egypt, Yusuf was sold for the paltry sum of 20 dirhams to a nobleman from the royal court, who bore the title of Aziz. He took Yusuf into his service, and he instructed his wife to be kind to him. He asked her to treat him honourably. He had no children so he thought that one day he might adopt him as his son.

Thus, according to God's plan, Yusuf was brought from a small village to the most civilized city of the time to grow in knowledge, judgement and power.

Whenever some hardship befalls a believer, it is very likely that God is planning something better for him. As we find in the case of Yusuf, he was thrown into a well only to be taken to a far better place. But this happens only if the people concerned endure their misfortunes with patience.

Then Aziz's wife, whose name was Zulaykha, felt very attracted to Yusuf, but he kept his distance and never responded to her advances. God helped him to keep away from evil and from all shameful deeds. Zulaykha tried to throw the blame on Yusuf but finally his innocence was established.

Zulaykha however threatened to send him to prison if he did not listen to her. Then Yusuf prayed to God that he preferred prison to giving in to her advances. His prayer was accepted and he was sent to prison. Prison opened another chapter in the life of the Prophet Yusuf. God always plans things, which are for the betterment of the believer; even if at a face value they look like hardships, they may eventually turn out to be blessings. This is exactly what happened in the case of the Prophet Yusuf. God rewards those who preserve their chastity and are patient. God was with Yusuf. He had a great plan for his future. It was here that God granted him prophethood. Then Yusuf began preaching the call of God to the other prisoners.

There were two prisoners who were servants in the royal court. One of them was the king's cup-bearer and the other one was the king's baker. Each had been charged with conspiring to poison the king. One night each of them had a strange dream. They asked Yusuf to interpret both their dreams.

The cup-bearer had dreamt that he was pressing grapes to make wine. The baker saw in his dream that he himself was carrying some bread on his head, which was pecked at by birds.

Yusuf told them that the ability to interpret dreams had been given to him by his Lord. He felt that it was the right time to teach them the true faith, so he made a long speech to his cell mates. He taught them to believe in the one true God and urged them to give up idol-worship. (12:39-40). And then he gave the interpretation of their dreams.

To the cup bearer Yusuf said that he would shortly be released from prison and would pour wine for the king. To the baker Yusuf said that he would be sentenced to death and birds would peck at his head.

Yusuf's predictions came true. After being put on trial, the baker was found guilty and charged with trying to poison the king. Thus the baker was condemned to death. The cup-bearer was released and returned to the palace to his old job of serving wine to the king.

A few years after this incident, the king of Egypt had a very strange dream that seven weak cows were devouring seven fat ones, and seven green ears of corn were being replaced by seven dry ones. All the wise men of Egypt were invited to interpret this dream, but no one could produce an answer, which would satisfy the king. At this moment the cup-bearer was reminded of Yusuf's ability to interpret dreams. He told the king about him and the king immediately sent him to call Yusuf.

Yusuf at once interpreted the king's dream. He explained that in Egypt there would be seven years of prosperity. But following these seven years of prosperity and abundance there would come seven years of famine, when crops would not grow, cattle would die and people would starve to death. He also suggested measures to solve this problem.

The king was very pleased with this interpretation and sent his

messenger to bring Yusuf to the royal palace. But Yusuf refused to leave the prison until his name was cleared. Yusuf was to carry out the divine mission, therefore, it was necessary that any false charges should be cleared and he should emerge with a clean image.

The king ordered an enquiry into Yusuf's complaint. Aziz's wife and other women were called by the king. The Aziz's wife openly admitted her crime saying: "We know no evil of him. It was I who attempted to seduce him. He was chaste and truthful."

Thus Yusuf was honourably released from the prison. The king was very impressed by his wisdom and truthfulness. The king honoured him by making him his most trusted minister. Yusuf was given charge of the storehouses, and was thus established in the land. (12:50-57)

Thus the dark prison became a stepping stone to the royal court and ultimately to the seat of power in the lands of Egypt. The story of the Prophet Yusuf is a great reminder to believers to put their entire trust in Allah at all times.

Yusuf arranged for grain to be properly stored all over the country. During the seven good years, he saw to it that there was enough grain to see them through the hard times. The seven good years passed followed by seven lean and hungry years when no crop would grow. The whole of Egypt was hit by famine.

The famine affected the neighbouring countries as well. So caravans came from all directions to buy grain or barter for it.

The land of Canaan, the homeland of Yusuf, was also hit by famine. Yusuf's brothers too came to him for grain. Yusuf recognized them and gave them enough provisions. He told them that the next time they should bring their younger brother (Yusuf's real brother) Bin-Yameen. When Bin-Yameen came Yusuf detained him. Then, on the next visit of the brothers, Yusuf revealed himself and forgave them; he sent his shirt to his father and asked his brothers to bring his parents.

Yusuf embraced his parents and, showing them the deepest respect, made them sit on the throne. Seeing the high position of Yusuf, they all fell prostrate before him, as a mark of thanksgiving. Thus the dream that Yusuf had had as a boy of the sun, the moon and eleven stars prostrating themselves before him had come true.

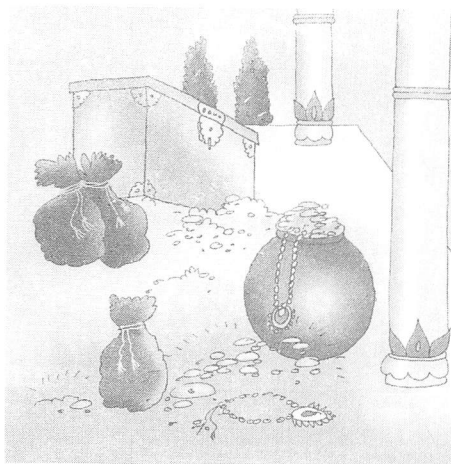
Overwhelmed with gratitude to God, Yusuf prostrated himself before Him Saying: 'O my Lord!'

Yusuf praised God for making his dream come true, for bringing him out of the prison, and for the reconciliation with his brothers and his parents and for granting him power and the ability to interpret of dreams, and he prayed that he might die as a Muslim and be united with the righteous. (12:100-101)

(i) The Prophet Ayyub

The Prophet Ayyub was granted revelation and was guided by Allah. He was full of patience and constancy, and always turned to God in repentance. He is represented in the Quran as a patient man.

The Prophet Ayub (Job) was an Israelite prophet of the ninth century B.C. According to the Bible, he was initially very rich. He was blessed with farms, cattle, houses, children, etc., to such an extent that it was said that nobody was his peer in the entire East. In spite of this, however, Ayub was a very grateful and faithful person. His life set an example of how a person may remain humble and modest, in spite of being blessed with great wealth and honour.



But, Satan reversed the lesson to be learned from this situation. He managed to convince people that Ayub's extraordinary reverence for God was on account of the extraordinary blessings that had been showered on him. If he were to be deprived of these blessings, —so Satan maintained— his entire gratefulness would vanish.

God thereupon set another example through Ayyub. His cattle died, his farms were destroyed, his children died and even his body was afflicted with a disease. All his friends and relatives left him, except his wife who remained with him. But Ayub reconciled himself with God's decision. He exercised the utmost patience. In the words of the Bible:

'Then Job, tore his robe and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshipped.' And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job did not sin, nor did he charge God with wrong-doing.' (Job, 1:20-22)

When Ayub showed so much patience and gratefulness, not only was a befitting reward set apart for him in the Hereafter, but his circumstances in the world were also changed greatly for the better.

"Then God gave him double of what he had before" (Job:42:12).

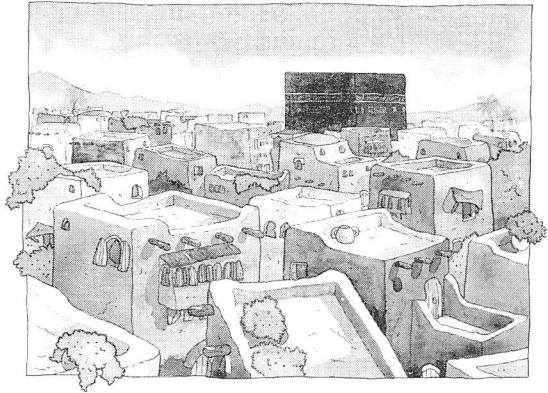
This very incident is thus described in the Prophet Muhammad's Tradition (Hadith) in figurative language: "When God changed the days of Ayub again, He sent a shower of golden grass-hoppers down upon him."

UNIT 6

The Prophet Muhammad at Makkah

(I) THE EARLY LIFE OF THE PROPHET

The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, was born in Makkah in 570 A.D. in the tribe of the Quraysh and died at the age of 63 in 632 A.D. in Madinah. The year of his birth is known among the Arabs as the Year of the Elephant (*Aam al-Fil*) referring to the campaign of Abrahah, an Abyssinian ruler, who had come to Makkah to destroy the Kabah. Makkah was then inhabited mainly by the tribe of the Quraysh. In those times, this tribe enjoyed great prestige all over Arabia and the neighbouring countries, for Makkah was a flourishing trade and religious centre.



Muhammad was still in his mother's womb when his father, Abdullah, died. After his birth, Aminah, his mother, sent the baby to Abdul Muttalib, his grandfather, who was in the Kabah at that time. The grandfather was overjoyed at the news, for he had loved Abdullah, Muhammad's father, very much. He gave him the name "Muhammad", meaning "the praised one." As was the practice of the Makkan nobility, he was handed over to a wet nurse, Halimah al-Sadiyya, who belonged to the Banu Sad tribe. This custom is still practiced among the Makkan aristocracy.

Halimah nursed Muhammad for two years and a few months. She said that while he stayed with them, her family received all kinds of unaccustomed blessings. Having nursed so many children before, she noticed something 'different' or 'extraordinary' about the infant Muhammad.

Two years later, after the child had been weaned, Halimah brought him back to his mother. But Makkah at that time was stricken with an epidemic,

so Aminah asked her to take him back to live in the pure air of the desert.

Thus Muhammad remained in the charge of Halimah until the age of five. He learned Arabic in its purest form from this tribe. Muhammad returned to his mother after five years of desert life. Then Aminah took him to Madinah (at that time known as Yathrib) to meet her uncles, the Banu al-Najjar. She was accompanied by Umm Ayman, her servant, on that trip. After a stay of one month in Madinah, Aminah was on her way back to Makkah, when passing through a village called Abwah, she fell ill and died there. She was buried in Abwah. It fell to Umm Ayman to bring Muhammad back to Makkah.

Therefore, the orphan Muhammad was taken care of by his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, chief of the clan of the Banu Hashim. He looked after him with great affection. As leader of the Quraysh, he used to sit on a cushion in the Kabah, and whenever Muhammad joined him, he was allowed to sit on that cushion. If anyone tried to stop him, his grandfather would say, "Leave him alone. By God, he is very important." (Ibn Hisham) Abdul Muttalib died when Muhammad was eight years old.

Now the guardianship of Muhammad passed to Abu Talib, his uncle, who was a merchant.

Trade

Once when Abu Talib was preparing to go to Syria on a trading journey, Muhammad expressed a keen desire to accompany him. Though he was too young to undertake such a difficult journey, Abu Talib was so full of affection for him that he could not refuse, and agreed to take him along.

Their trade caravan halted in the city of Busra in Syria. There was a Christian monk by the name of Bahirah living there in a monastery. He had read in the ancient books about the emergence of an Arab prophet. He recognised in Muhammad the signs of prophethood. He knew at once that he was the boy who had been destined to become the last of the prophets.

Ibn Ishaq writes, "Muhammad entered his adulthood as if God Himself was protecting him from the widespread evils of the period of ignorance." By this time he was well-known in Makkah for his good morals, gentle disposition and sincerity. In fact, he was called Al-Amin (trustworthy) and As-Sadiq (truthful) by his compatriots.

Before attaining prophethood, while Muhammad was still engaged in trading, Abdullah bin Abi al-Hamsa said:

"I had transacted some business with Muhammad in those days and owed him money. I asked him to wait till I brought the required sum. When I reached home, I completely forgot about it. I remembered three days later and rushed to the spot where I had left Muhammad. He was there waiting for me."

“He did not upbraid me. All he said was, ‘You caused me a great deal of inconvenience. I have been waiting for you here for the last three days.’” (Ibn Ishaq)

Marriage with Khadija

When Muhammad was twenty-five, a rich 40-year old widow, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid of the Quraysh tribe, entrusted him with the management of her business. She used to employ men to engage in trading on her behalf, and rewarded them with a share of the profits. Muhammad was so honest in all his dealings that she was deeply impressed by his virtues and expressed her desire to marry him. After consultations with his uncle, Muhammad accepted the proposal of marriage. Khadijah became his first wife and during her lifetime he had no other wife. With the exception of Ibrahim, who died in infancy, all his children were born to Khadijah. All his sons died in infancy. Of the daughters, Ruqaiyyah, Zaynab, Umm Kulthum and Fatimah lived long enough to accept Islam and migrate to Madinah with the Prophet.

The Reconstruction of Kabah

When Muhammad was twenty-five, the Quraysh decided to rebuild the Kabah after a sudden flood had shaken its foundations and cracked its walls. The old structure was demolished and the new construction began. When the walls rose from the ground and the time came to place the famous Black Stone (*Hajr al-Aswad*) in its place on the east wall, a dispute arose among the clans as to who would have the honour of laying it in place. Each clan wanted to have the honour of placing the stone for itself. This dispute almost led to a civil war. No peaceful solution seemed possible.

A covenant known as the Alliance of Fudul (Hilf al-Fudul) had been entered into by three men, Fadal bin Fadal, Fadal bin Vida and Fadal bin Harith. This was to ensure that no oppressor ever lived in Makkah. In view of the widespread disturbances, there was a move to revive the Alliance of Fudul, to restore tribal harmony and ensure peaceful co-existence.

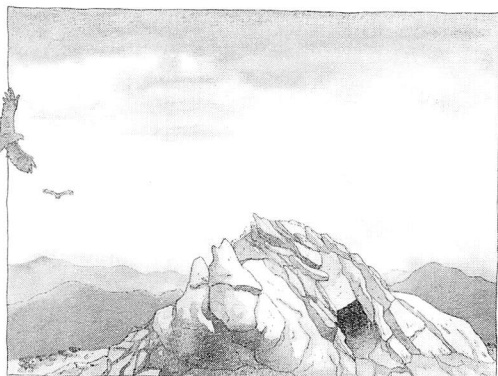
At this critical juncture Abu Umayyah, the son of Mughirah al-Makhzumi, said to the Makkans, “Put it off till tomorrow. The man who enters the Kabah first of all in the morning will be our arbitrator in this dispute.” Everybody liked the idea. Men from different tribes ran to the Kabah before dawn next morning. Each one tried to be the first to enter the House of God. But the first one to pass through the gate was Muhammad. On seeing him they all said, “There goes al-Amin. We shall agree with his verdict.” Then he was asked to give his decision on the matter. He took a sheet of cloth and spread it on the ground, and placed the Black Stone in the

middle of it and then he asked the chiefs of all tribes to hold different ends of the sheet and lift it up. They carried the stone to the site of construction. Then Muhammad picked up the stone from the sheet and set it in place. Thus a bloody clash was averted and the dispute resolved to everybody's satisfaction.

(II) NABUWAH (PROPHETHOOD)

Visits to the Cave of Hira

With his marriage to the wealthy Khadijah, Muhammad had access to all her wealth and property, and could expand his business as much as he desired. He had every opportunity to lead a successful and comfortable life. But with the passing of the years he became less and less interested in business and devoted more and more of his time to the search for truth by means of reflection and meditation.



Instead of trying to establish himself in his society, he took to the desert. Over a period of six months, he would often go to mount Hira, three miles from Makkah. He would stay there in the cave, lost in thought for hours on end. When his supply of food and water was exhausted, he would return home for provisions and go back to the solitude of nature to pray and meditate. He sought answers to the mysteries of life. What is man's true role in life? What does the Lord require of us, as His servants? From where does man come and where will he go after death? It was to find answers to these perplexing questions that he betook himself to the stillness of the desert.

Finally, during the month of Ramadan, God turned in mercy to His Prophet, to guide him to the path of truth. At the age of 40, on February 12, 610 A.D., the Prophet was sitting all alone in his cave, when Gabriel, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in human form, bringing the first message from God. The Prophet's quest had finally been rewarded: God granted him guidance and chose him as His Prophet.

The angel said to him "Read."

The Prophet replied, "I do not know how to read."

Muhammad now felt that his body was being squeezed hard. Then the angel released him and repeated the same command. Again Muhammad

replied that he did not know how to recite. The angel again squeezed him and then released him for the third time and said: Read!"

Then a change came over him and he was able to repeat the divine words. Then Gabriel revealed to him the chapter called Al-Alaq.

"Recite in the name of your Lord, who created; who created man from a clot of blood; Recite, and your Lord is the most Gracious. It is He who has taught man by the pen that which he did not know." (96:1-5)

Muhammad recited these verses, repeating them after the angel. Then he found that these words were written on his heart (Ibn Ishaq).

The Prophet trembled in fear at what he had seen and heard in the cave. The revelation was a totally new experience for him. He set off for his house immediately after the disappearance of the angel.

On reaching home, the Prophet asked Khadijah to wrap him in blankets. He was shivering with high fever. When he calmed down, he related the whole incident to her.

Khadijah, being very kind and understanding, tried her best to reassure him.

She said: "By Him who dominates Khadijah's soul, I pray and I hope that you will be the Prophet of this nation. By God, He will not let you down. You are kind to your relations. You speak the truth, you help the poor and bear their burden, you honour guests and help those in distress. Surely God will never let you fail."

Khadijah then suggested that they should go and consult her cousin Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who had become a Christian hermit.

Waraqa heard the whole account from Muhammad and said:

"I am sure the angel that descended on Moses has descended on you. You will be abused, and you will be pursued. I wish I could be alive to give you my support when your people will turn you out."

"Will they turn me out?" The Prophet found this difficult to believe. Waraqa replied that people have always turned against those who are recipients of God's messages.

(III) LIFE AT MAKKAH (POST REVELATION)

First converts

The Prophet's wife Khadijah was the first convert to Islam. When the news of Muhammad's prophethood reached a freed slave, Zayd, who was 30 years of age, and his cousin Ali, who was about eleven, both declared their faith in Islam. Abu Bakr, who had been the Prophet's friend from

childhood, was out of town. On his return he heard of the new experience of the Prophet. People said to him that his friend had taken leave of his senses, believing that angels brought him messages from God. But Abu Bakr trusted the Prophet completely. Not for one moment did he doubt his veracity. He immediately went to meet the Prophet to find out the truth for himself. Abu Bakr asked the Prophet whether an angel had really descended upon him from God and had given him a message. The Prophet said "Yes," and without a moment's hesitation Abu Bakr professed his faith. He did not require any arguments to be convinced that he was telling the truth.

This small group of the Faithful were the first believers in Islam. In the first stage, the Prophet was asked to spread the message of Islam quietly, to avoid arousing any hostility. Abu Bakr, being an influential merchant, was able to bring some of his friends, also rich merchants, into the fold of Islam. But the majority of the conversions took place among the weak and the poor.

The Prophet received the command from God to spread the message publicly, but first to his own kin.

According to Arab custom, people used to ascend a hill when they had to announce some important news. So the Prophet, with his all-important tidings, climbed up on a hillock called Safa, situated near the Kabah. He then called out to the people, who all gathered around him. Then he addressed them thus: "If I tell you that a big army is hiding behind that mountain and is ready to attack you, will you believe me?" They all chorused, "Of course, we will, for we trust you. We know you always tell the truth." Then the Prophet said:

"God has commanded me to warn you, my kinsmen, that you should worship none but the one and only God. If you fail to do so, you will invite God's wrath. And I will not be able to do anything to help you, even though you are my kinsmen."

Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle, became very angry and said:

"Woe to you on this day! Did you assemble us for this?"

Some remarked that he had gone mad. Soon they all dispersed without caring to give any thought to the words of the Prophet.

Opposition to the Prophet

There was one main reason for the Quraysh to oppose the Prophet, and to keep him from spreading his message. Makkah was a centre of pilgrimage because of the Kabah, which housed 360 idols of the neighbouring tribes and nations. Since Islam believed in only one God, the Quraysh feared that once the concept of one God became popular, the tribes would stop visiting

the Kabah to pay homage to the idols. This would deprive them of the respect they commanded as guardians of the Kabah. Besides, the prosperity of Makkah depended mainly on these idols. People in great numbers from the neighbouring tribes used to visit Makkah all the year round to make offerings to the idols. This brought prosperity to Makkah, for trade flourished side by side with the pilgrimage. Makkah being a desert, no agricultural or economic resources existed there. The Kabah was their only asset. But not all of the Makkans were hostile. There were people who gave serious thought to the message of the Quran and gradually began to accept it. About 200 people from Makkah as well as the neighbouring settlements entered the fold of Islam.

The Quraysh, who enjoyed the Makkan leadership considered the teachings of the new religion an insult to the religion of their forefathers. In Islam they saw a danger to their own leadership. Such leaders as Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab were the most hostile to the Prophet. They began to give serious thought to the matter. Islam was fast gaining ground, so they thought that they could not afford to postpone taking action. They had to nip this menace in the bud.

The Support of Abu Talib

The chiefs of different clans gathered to discuss this matter. They all felt that if Abu Talib did not come in their way, they would have no difficulty in finding a solution to this problem. So they all came to Abu Talib to tell him to stop Muhammad from spreading his message.

They warned him, "Tell Muhammad to stop spreading his message, or you will abandon him. If you fail to do so, you should be ready to suffer for the deeds of your nephew."

Abu Talib, an old man, felt that he would not be able to resist their wrath. So he told Muhammad what the Quraysh chiefs had said to him and then added, "My dearest nephew, look to your own safety, and to the safety of your uncle, and do not cause me to carry a burden I cannot bear."

For a while the Prophet stood motionless. On the one hand, there was his old uncle, weakened by the people's opposition, and on the other hand, there was the responsibility to proclaim the truth till his last breath. And the only source of strength was his faith and his conviction in the truth. So he decided to discharge his duty whatever the cost. In a firm and calm voice, and with tears in his eyes, he said: "O uncle! By God Almighty, I swear that even if they were to place the sun on my right and the moon on my left, I would not give up my mission. I must go on carrying it out until I die."

Abu Talib, touched by the sincerity and force of the words uttered by his nephew, remained motionless for a while. Then he turned to the Prophet and said:

"My nephew, go your way. Do your duty. Let my people turn against me. I am with you. No one shall harm you as long as I live."

Opposition Intensified

When the Quraysh saw that the pressure on Abu Talib had failed, they decided to make life unbearable for the Prophet and his followers. Slaves, the weakest sections of society, were the worst sufferers. Their masters beat them brutally and some of them were beaten to death. But they suffered all this patiently. Abu Bakr spent much of his wealth on freeing these slaves.

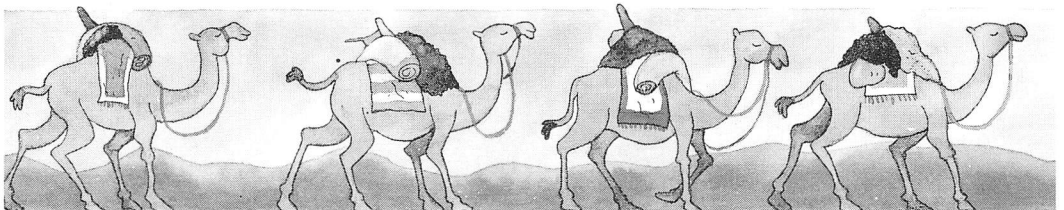
Even the wealthy Muslims were not spared. They were also persecuted. Their own relatives turned against them. After the death of Abu Talib and Khadijah, people were emboldened to persecute the Prophet. They threw rubbish on him as he passed through the streets. They spread thorns in his path. They made a noise when the Prophet stood up in the Kabah to pray.

The Makkans did all that they could to turn people away from the Prophet. But in spite of all their efforts, Islam continued to spread. Some of the powerful men of Makkah accepted Islam. Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle, Umar ibn Al-Khattab, who was famous for his bravery, and Abu Dharr Ghifari were among them.

The First Migration

The Makkan chiefs were more enraged than ever before. They made life so difficult for the Muslims that a number of them migrated to Abyssinia, an area nearby, with the Prophet's permission. At first fifteen men and women migrated to Abyssinia. Slowly, the number reached 83.

This safe haven of the Muslims made the Makkans all the more angry. They sent two of their men to Negus, the king of Abyssinia. These men brought him precious gifts and requested him to turn these 'ignoble' people out of his land as they had forsaken their forefathers' religion to follow a new religion. Negus sent for the Muslims and asked them to explain their case. Thereupon Jafar, son of Abu Talib, briefly explained to him the teachings of Islam and recited some portions from the Quran from the chapter called 'Mary'. Negus was very impressed and said: "Go forth into my kingdom; I shall not extradite you at all."



Then he turned to the Makkans and said: "Go away, I cannot give up these people. They are following the true faith."

Social Boycott

With the passage of time, the Makkan chiefs became more and more bitter. They felt that it was Muhammad's clan, the Banu Hashim, headed by Abu Talib that was responsible for all this misery and that if they had given up Muhammad, all his activities could have been stopped without delay. They made it known to the Banu Hashim that if they did not surrender Muhammad to them, they would have to suffer the consequences.

The tribes of Makkah entered into an agreement. They agreed to cut off all dealings with the Banu Hashim. No one was to sell anything to them. The agreement was signed and hung up in the sacred Kabah. This was the seventh year of prophethood.

This period of boycott was one of great hardship for the Banu Hashim and the Muslims. While this ban was in force, Abu Talib, the chief of the Banu Hashim, had to take refuge in a narrow valley, which came to be known as Abu Talib's Pass. For three years, the Prophet and all his relatives lived in this valley. Many of the Muslims joined them. All supplies to the valley were cut off. The Banu Hashim had to live on the leaves and roots of trees.

Finally, certain kind-hearted Makkan leaders took pity on the Banu Hashim. They tore to pieces the agreement hanging in the Kabah so that the Banu Hashim could come back to their homes. But soon after this, Abu Talib the Prophet's uncle, died. His health had deteriorated during the three years of hardship. Although Abu Talib had not accepted Islam, as head of his clan he had protected the Prophet from his opponents.

The Year of Sorrow

After his death, Abu Lahab, another uncle of the Prophet, became head of the Banu Hashim. He was the bitterest enemy of Islam and the Muslims. He made it clear to the Quraysh that Muhammad no longer enjoyed his clan's protection. In those days, it was impossible for an individual to survive without the protection of his clan.

Khadijah, the faithful wife of the Prophet, also died soon after the ban was lifted. Both these deaths took place in the 10th year of prophethood.

The loss of Abu Talib and Khadijah saddened the Prophet, for they had been great sources of strength to him. It was their deaths that made the enemy bold enough to persecute him. One day when the Prophet was praying in the Kabah, Abu Jahl put a piece of cloth round his neck and twisted it hard. He would have strangled the Prophet had not Abu Bakr rushed to his help in time.

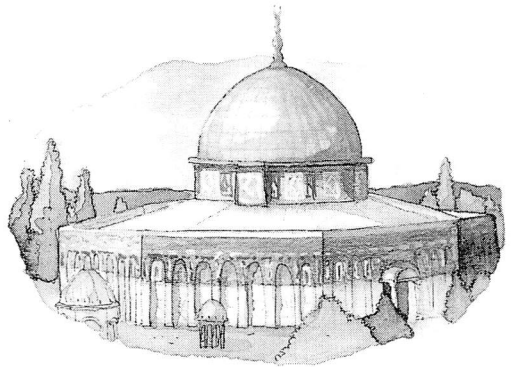
The Journey to Taif

Day by day, the situation worsened. So the Prophet decided to go to Taif, a neighbouring town, 40 miles from Makkah to spread the teachings of Islam. He was accompanied only by his servant Addas. He spoke to the leaders of the town and invited them to accept Islam. They paid no heed to his message. They were such evil people that they did not stop at that. When the Prophet was leaving the town in a dejected state, he was chased by street urchins instigated by these chiefs. They abused him and threw stones at him as he walked out of town. They continued to pelt him with stones at until rightfall. Relieved of their presence, he stopped on the way in an orchard to rest. He was badly hurt, bleeding profusely. Yet he only prayed for their guidance. He did not curse them. In all humility he addressed God in these words.

"Lord! Forgive these people, for they know not what they do."

Miraj

In the tenth year of Prophethood the angel Gabriel came to take the Prophet on the miraculous journey to the heavens known as Miraj. They first went from Makkah to Jerusalem, the Prophet riding on a winged horse. At Jerusalem, the Prophet said his prayers in the Temple of David, where all other prophets joined him in prayer. Then he ascended to the heavens, still accompanied by the angel Gabriel. God granted an audience to His messenger. It was on this blessed occasion that the Prophet received God's commandments, including the prayer to be said five times daily. The Prophet then came back home. All this took place overnight.



There are two views about this heavenly journey. Some hold that this ascension was made by the Prophet's soul, while others hold that it was made by his body. According to Umm Hani, the body of the Prophet was never missed from his bed. Rather God caused only his soul to travel. Aishah, the Prophet's wife, was also of the same view. A third opinion is that the Miraj from Makkah to Jerusalem took place in the flesh, while from Jerusalem to the heavens it took place only in the spirit.

Islam spreads to Yathrib (Madinah)

The Prophet used to convey the message of Islam to all those who came from outside Makkah. In the eleventh year of prophethood, six men from the tribe of Khazraj of Yathrib (later known as Madinatun-Nabi, the Prophet's city) accepted Islam during their pilgrimage to Makkah in 620. The following year twelve more men from Yathrib accepted Islam. This time they took an oath pledging allegiance to the Prophet. This oath is known as the First Pledge of Aqabah, named after the Aqabah pass, at Mina, near Makkah, where they had made their pledge. They requested the Prophet to send Musab bin Umayr, a companion of the Prophet, to Yathrib to convey the message of Islam to the inhabitants. There the divine message was immediately well received, and within a year, a number of people converted to Islam as a result of the preaching of Musab ibn Umayr.

In the thirteenth year of Prophethood, seventy two Muslims from Yathrib came for the Hajj. On behalf of their people, they invited the Prophet to make Yathrib his home. During the pilgrimage they also took the oath, known as the second pledge of Aqabah. These men from Yathrib, of the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, pledged to protect the Prophet from his enemies. For all this sacrifice on their part they wanted only one assurance from the Prophet: that when the Prophet had gained power, he should not leave them and return to Makkah. The Prophet replied: "You have that assurance. I am yours and you are mine."

Now the Muslims began to emigrate to Yathrib in large numbers to escape persecution at the hands of the Quraysh. Only the Prophet, Abu Bakr and a few Muslims were left in Makkah.

This infuriated the Quraysh, for Islam was now strengthening its roots in Yathrib. They were greatly alarmed that their enemies were gaining a firm foothold. There was nothing more dangerous than that. So they resolved to remove the danger once and for all. They said: "Kill Muhammad and Islam will die with him."

(IV) HIJRAH

The Emigration

As the Makkans were plotting against life, God sent His command to him to leave for Yathrib. Before making his preparations, he first called Ali and gave him the people's deposits and asked him to return them to the depositors. Already, the young men with whom the Quraysh had conspired

to carry out the assassination were collecting on that fateful night to put their plan to action. But God had another plan. And who can overrule the will of God? Accordingly, the Prophet made Ali lie in his bed while he himself left the house at midnight.

The Prophet had already informed Abu Bakr, his closest friend, of the plan to emigrate, to be conducted in total secrecy. They left Makkah before dawn, riding on two camels which Abu Bakr had kept ready to carry them across the desert. About five miles from the city they took shelter in a cave called Thawr.

When the Makkans learnt of the Prophet's escape, they were mad with rage. They offered a prize of one hundred camels to anyone who captured Muhammad. A number of horsemen raced out into the desert. A few of them even managed to reach the very mouth of the cave of Thawr. Abu Bakr was stricken with fear lest they harm the Prophet. But the Prophet reassured him, saying:

*"Don't be afraid. We are not just two in this cave. There is a third—
God." (Bukhari)*

The Prophet and Abu Bakr lay hidden in this cave for three days and three nights. On the fourth day they came out and continued the journey along with Abdullah ibn Urayqit, their guide, and Amir bin Fuhaira, Abu Bakr's servant.

After a continuous ride of a day and a night the Prophet and Abu Bakr stopped to rest. It was then that Suraqah bin Malik, who had sighted them on the road to Madinah, managed to come close to them. He had been one of those horsemen who, eager to earn the reward of a hundred camels, had gone in hot pursuit of the Prophet. But when he spurred on his horse, it stumbled and fell, bringing Suraqa down also. He made two more attempts to approach the Prophet, but the same thing happened each time. Now Suraqa was frightened. He realised that no one could harm the Prophet, for he was under divine protection. He begged for mercy. The Prophet forgave him.

The Life of The Prophet Muhammad at Madinah

(I) THE EMERGENCE OF A MUSLIM COMMUNITY

After six days' journey the Prophet reached Quba, a village three miles from Madinah. At that time the people of Madinah had been waiting impatiently for his arrival. The Prophet stayed for two weeks in Quba, where he built the first mosque of Islam.

Each morning people used to come out of the city and watch the road from Quba. At last the great day arrived. He set off for Madinah on a Friday morning. When he entered the town, he found that all the people, men, women and children, had turned out to receive him. The women stood on the house-tops and sang songs of joy.

They had all lined both sides of the street to receive him. When the Prophet entered the city, everybody wanted him to be his guest. The more zealous held the reins of the camel and wanted the Prophet to dismount in front of their doors and enter their houses. But the Prophet refused politely and said: "Leave my camel alone. She is under the command of God; she will stop where God wants her to stop."

It finally stopped at a site which belonged to two orphans of the Banu Najjar tribe. The Prophet dismounted saying: "It seems that this is where God wants us to stop."

He then bought this land to build a mosque and some houses on it. After settling this matter, the Prophet asked who lived nearest to the site. Abu Ayyub Ansari said that his house was the nearest and requested the Prophet to be his guest. The Prophet stayed in his house for about seven months. In the meantime, his house was built.

From the day the Prophet came to Yathrib, it came to be called Madinatun-Nabi or "The City of the Prophet."

The Prophet entered Yathrib on the 17 September 622. This year was later designated by Caliph Umar as the first year of the Islamic era, for this event was considered to be the most important in the history of Islam.

The Brotherhood of Islam

The first problem faced by the Prophet was that of the Makkan refugees. They had neither homes nor money. Most of them had been well-to-do in Makkah, but they had left everything there. So the first important thing for the Prophet was to settle them in their new surroundings.

The solution to this problem was found in the concept of brotherhood in Islam. The Prophet collected the Muslims and suggested that one Ansari (Madinan) Muslim and one refugee Makkan Muslim should become linked together as two brothers.

They immediately accepted the suggestion of the Prophet. Each Ansari took one Makkan Muslim as his brother. This bond between the two became even more powerful than a blood relationship. The Ansari gave his Makkan brother half of everything he possessed—house, land, money and other belongings.

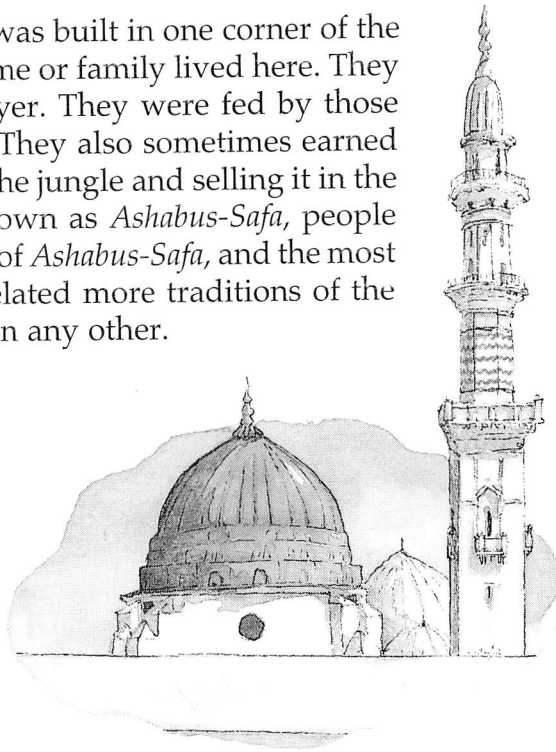
The Prophet's Mosque

The next most important task for the Prophet was to build a mosque. This mosque was built on the land he had bought from the orphans. It had mud walls and a roof of palm leaves. Huts were built adjacent to the mosque for the Prophet's family.

A platform with a thatched roof was built in one corner of the mosque. Poor people who had no home or family lived here. They spent their time in worship and prayer. They were fed by those Muslims who could afford to do so. They also sometimes earned their living by collecting wood from the jungle and selling it in the market. These people came to be known as *Ashabus-Safa*, people of the bench. Abu Hurayrah, also one of *Ashabus-Safa*, and the most constant attendant of the Prophet, related more traditions of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet than any other.

Yathrib was inhabited mostly by the tribes of Aws and Khazraj. Both tribes rapidly entered the fold of Islam. Some Jewish tribes also lived in the city. They were rich, owned orchards and were very powerful.

Now the Prophet turned his attention to the important task of establishing friendly relations with various tribes. The Banu Qaynuqa, Banu Nazir, Banu Qurayza and the Jewish tribes, were neither friendly



nor hostile towards the Aws and Khazraj. But now that the Aws and Khazraj had accepted Islam, it was necessary to make a new treaty to determine each other's rights and duties in the new scenario, with the Prophet as their leader.

The Covenant of Madinah

When the Prophet saw that the Jews were not going to accept Islam, he devised a plan to save the Muslims from any future disturbance. He negotiated a contract called the pact of Madinah for this purpose.

This pact relating to religion and other social matters, was entered into five months after the emigration. It determined their rights as well as their duties as allies of the Muslims. The details of the pact of Madinah are as follows:

In the name of God, the compassionate the Merciful.

This is a covenant in writing from Muhammad, the Prophet of God, to the believers and Muslims of Madinah and the Jews who want an alliance with them. Each party, adhering to its own culture and tradition, will be bound by the articles of this covenant.

1. The custom of *qisas* (requital retaliation), prevalent since ancient times, will continue to be observed with justice and kindness.
2. Every clan shall redeem its prisoners with kindness and justice.
3. All the members of the different clans will be bound by this covenant which lays down that the hand of every man shall be against him, who seeks to spread injustice, sin, enmity or competition between believers. No concession will be made, even though the person concerned may be the son of one of the leaders or chiefs.
4. No believer shall stay a believer for the sake of an unbeliever; neither shall he assist an unbeliever against a believer.
5. A poor Muslim is entitled to the same right to protection as a Muslim of wealth and position.
6. The Jews who submit to the authority of the Muslims are entitled to their assistance and the same rights as Muslims without injustice or partisanship.
7. In any military expeditions, the Jews are expected to support the Muslims and to contribute to the cost of war. At the same time,

the Jews are not allowed to assist the opponents of the Muslims. And the Muslims will not support their enemies.

8. If the contracting parties want to disassociate themselves from this covenant, they can do so only with the permission of the Prophet.
9. No one must help an evil-doer or shelter him. Whoever does so shall be cursed by God and His anger will fall upon him, on the Day of Judgement.
10. If the Muslims want to make peace with someone, the Jews will be bound to concern and join in this.
11. If anyone is convicted of killing a believer, and a witness or proof of this killing is available, he will be subject to retaliation, unless the next of kin is willing to accept blood money.
12. All future disputes between those who accept this charter shall be referred, under God, to the Prophet.

This agreement was made with the Jews who were composed of three large tribes — the Banu Qaynuqa, Banu Nazir, and Banu Qurayzah.

All the three Jewish tribes subsequently violated the articles of the covenant. They plotted against the Muslims, and sided with the enemies of the Muslims. In this way, this covenant was soon annulled.

This pact, dictated by the Prophet, granted full religious freedom to the Jews. The Muslims and the Jews had to live in peace and amity together as brothers, helping one another in times of need.

After the conclusion of this treaty, Islam found a safe home in Yathrib.

The Prophet's Family

The Prophet had a large family. He married twelve other wives after the death of Khadijah. Most of them were widows, two of his wives being Jewish, while one was a Christian.

In those days, polygamy was prevalent. Islam restricted the number of wives to four. In those days, when men were often killed in battle the women who were left behind had to be looked after. So taking several wives was like taking helpless refugees into one's home. They were treated kindly and generously. Muslim men were encouraged to look after the widows of friends who had died in battle, give them separate homes, and treat them equally in every respect.

The Prophet's wives shared his pious way of life. They made great personal sacrifices, bearing patiently with all kinds of hardship in the path

of God. So they became known as the mothers of the faithful. All the Prophet's sons had died in infancy. But four daughters borne by Khadijah survived infancy, grew to adulthood, married and bore children. They were Fatimah, Umm Kulthum, Ruqayyah and Zaynab.

The Battle of Badr

The Prophet was a man of peace and reconciliation. He urged his companions to ask God for peace, for the Prophet's main task was the communication of the divine message to the people; an atmosphere of peace and goodwill was essential to perform this duty. But the Quraysh did not allow him to work in peaceful conditions. When they saw that the Muslims were becoming increasingly stronger, they resolved to wage war and crush them altogether.

The Quraysh marched to Madinah with a thousand strong army. They camped at Badr, about eighty miles from Madinah. It was the month of Ramadan, 2 A.H. On hearing the news of the enemy camping at Badr, the Prophet marched out of Madinah at the head of an army of 313 Muslims. There were few horses and the Muslims had no armour. The Makkans, on the other hand, were well armed and had 300 horses and 700 camels.

The battle, in which the Makkans were seriously outnumbered, began on Friday the 17th of Ramadan. The fighting lasted only a few hours, during which the Prophet prayed continuously for divine succour. God then sent angels to help the Muslims who emerged victorious. The Quraysh suffered a total rout.

The defeat, however, did not teach the Quraysh a lesson, but further enraged them. Determined to wipe out the blot of this humiliation, they now began preparations for a second attack, on a much bigger scale. They raised an army of more than 3000 warriors and, mad with revenge, marched to Madinah led by Abu Sufyan.

The Battle of Uhud

The Battle of Uhud took place in 624 A.D. The enemy numbered 3000, while the Prophet's men numbered only 700. But with God on their side, the Muslims, successfully repulsed the attack. The enemy started retreating, leaving behind large quantities of booty. Victory was imminent for the Muslims, when forty archers whom the Prophet had assigned to the hillside to guard the pass, saw the retreating army and thought that if they remained on the hill, they would lose their share of the booty. Therefore most of them abandoned their posts. This left the way open for a counter attack.

When Khalid bin Walid, still a non-Muslim, saw the pass undefended, he led his men behind the hill and killed the few archers who still stood

guard. Then he fell upon the Muslims from the rear. Seeing this, the fleeing Quraysh leaders turned back. The Muslims were thrown into utter confusion. The Prophet himself was wounded. But the Muslims stood like a solid wall of stone around the Prophet, and managed to repulse all attacks with superhuman courage. Many fell dead and several were wounded. They had gone to the extent of sacrificing their lives to save the Prophet from the enemy onslaught. Slowly the enemy was beaten back.

The Quraysh lost 14 men, while the Muslims lost 70. Among the dead was Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle. The Prophet grieved over the loss of this brave soul. With deep sorrow the martyrs were buried and the Muslims came back to Madinah.

The Quraysh knew at heart that the Muslims would have emerged victorious, had not the fateful mistake of a few Muslims turned their victory into defeat. So for two years they made no attempt to invade Makkah.

(II) THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MADINAN COMMUNITY

(a) *Muwakhaat* (Brotherhood)

The position of the Muslims in Madinah was that of 'refugees'. In order to help them settle down properly, the Prophet encouraged brotherhood between Emigrants and the Helpers. On reaching Madinah, the Prophet called for a meeting between the Muhajirs (emigrants) and Ansaars (Madinan Muslims) and asked them to pledge brotherhood among themselves. He himself took Ali by the hand and said: 'This is my brother.' The Prophet then paired off Muhajirs and Ansaars as



brothers, taking care that each pair was close to one another in status, temperament, trade, etc. Although it was meant to meet a temporary situation, the result was effective and lasting. The Muhajirs, due to their long association with the Prophet, had acquired a sound knowledge of Islam. They had, moreover, imbibed the spirit of Islam which was manifested in

their behaviour, thinking, and their God-fearing attitude in all matters. Thanks to their close association with the Ansars, they were able to give their Ansar brothers a proper grounding in their new religion, so that they too imbibed the spirit of Islam.

Due to this fraternity having been formed, the Muhajir Muslims no longer remained strangers in Madinah. Both groups helped each other in all matters and associated freely. This fraternity became like a real blood relationship in that they even gave each other rights to the property of one another, just as real brothers do.

This brotherhood was such an ideal relationship that it is hard to find a parallel in history. The Muhajirs stayed in the homes of their Ansar brothers. The Ansars offered half of all their property to the emigrants. Their property mostly consisted of orchards. But the Muhajirs did not know how to cultivate the land. The Ansars were so fair and just in their dealing that they cultivated the land themselves, doing all the hard work, but sharing the produce equally with their Muhajir brothers. The Muhajirs were also given a share in the inheritance, when his Ansar brother died. Later on, when the Muhajirs had properly settled in Madinah, this share was discontinued, as the Quran then confined inheritance solely to the real family members.

Although the Ansars had wholeheartedly accepted them as their brothers, the Muhajirs for their part did not want to be a burden on them. Therefore they soon engaged themselves in different kinds of work for their subsistence. For instance, Abu Bakr started a cloth business and Umar Faruq bought and sold dates.

The Ansars had sacrificed a great deal to assist the Muhajirs during their time of need. Therefore, when Khaybar was conquered, the Prophet wanted to give them a share in these lands in recompense for their services. But the Ansars declined to accept this. They said that they had helped the Muhajirs only in the name of God, for the cause of God. They only wanted to earn a place in paradise, as the Prophet had promised them on the occasion of the second pledge of Aqabah. So they refused to accept any earthly recompense for the help they had extended to their Muhajir brothers.

(b) Fraternity

"O ye who believe. Observe your duty to Allah with right observance and die not till ye have surrendered (unto Him)."

"And hold fast, all of you together, to the cord of Allah, and do not separate. And remember Allah's favour to you: how you were enemies and He brought about a friendship between you, so that you became like brothers by His grace, and how you were on the brink of an abyss of

fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes clear His revelations to you in order that you may be guided."

The Prophet (may God bless him) said: "The Muslims are like a wall, one part supporting another. The Muslims are all one body. If the eye is injured the whole body suffers, and if the foot is injured, the whole body suffers."

In his speech from Mount Arafat to a great multitude of men, on the occasion of the Hajjat-al-Wada', "the farewell pilgrimage," his last visit to Mecca, he said: "O people, listen to my words with understanding for I do not know whether, after this year, I shall ever be among you in this place. Your lives and property are sacred and inviolable to each other until you appear before your Lord, just as this day and this month are sacred for all, and remember you will have to appear before your Lord who will demand from you an account of all your acts.

"The Lord has prescribed for every man his share of inheritance; no testament to the prejudice of heirs is lawful.

"The child belongs to the parent, and the violator of wedlock shall be stoned.

"Whoever falsely claims another for his father or his master will be cursed by God and the angels and all mankind.

"O people, you have rights over your wives and your wives have rights over you. It is their duty not to break their wifely faith, nor commit any act of manifest indecency. If they do so, you have authority to confine them in separate rooms and to punish them, but not severely. But if they refrain, clothe them and feed them properly. Treat your women with loving kindness. You have taken them on the security of Allah and made their persons lawful to you by the words of Allah.

"Be faithful to the trust imposed on you, and shun transgression.

"O people! Listen to my words and understand them. Know that all Muslims are brothers to each other; you are one fraternity. No thing belonging to one of you can be lawfully kept by his brother, unless it is given out of free goodwill. Refrain from committing injustice."

The Prophet himself practiced what he preached. He was always one with his people. When he proclaimed the brotherhood of Muslims, he did not exempt himself.

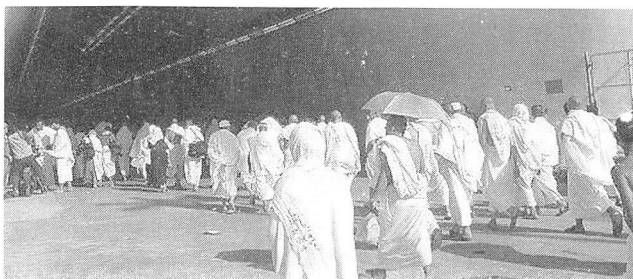
The Prophet of Islam not only proclaimed the fact of universal human brotherhood, but for the first time in the history of the world, made of it a principle and a fact of common law. All the ordinances of Islam incline towards this, and it has been shown to be the only ground of genuine human progress. Brotherly relations were established permanently between men and nations, however different in character and rank and wealth and power. "The slaves who say their prayers are your brothers." And these were not

empty words. They were actually so treated. In the intercourse between nations also there was established a brotherhood which still endures. The Prophet declared : "He is not of us who sides with his tribe in aggression, and he is not of us who calls others to help him in tyranny, and he is not of us who dies while assisting his tribe in injustice."

"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

This great brotherhood of all sorts and conditions of human beings is bound together by a very strong tie.

The observance of religious ordinances extend this universal brotherhood of Islam. It binds together all people in complete agreement and equality, the governor and the governed, the rich and the poor. One of the most important ways



of binding is the daily and weekly prayers in congregation, where all Muslims of every degree stand as equals in humanity, and the Imam, the leader, is chosen not for rank or wealth, but piety. Another is the yearly pilgrimage—a most important institution to the culture of Islam. On the pilgrimage, kings, peasants, nobles, workmen, rich and poor, all wear the same coarse clothing, perform the same ceremonies in the same way, equal as all mankind are equal at the hour of death.

According to Islam, all human beings have been created by one and the same God, and for this reason belong to one great brotherhood. No one is superior or inferior. All human beings are equal before God. All are equally his creatures and His servants.

c) Sincerity

In the Quran 'sincerity' is used in the sense of 'pure and unadulterated'. The concept of sincerity mentioned in the Quran denotes turning to God in devoutness. The life of the Prophet Muhammad was the very embodiment of sincerity and a model for all the believers to follow. A sincere believer devotes all his deeds throughout his entire life to seeking the approval of God and expects his reward only from Him. He does not make devious calculations based on the opinions of other people nor does he seek the favour of others. Therefore all of his actions are sincere and candid, such as would earn God's approval.

The Messenger of God emphasized sincerity as a truly Islamic virtue. Being true to the commandments of God and the Sunnah is considered the

mark of a true believer and a sincere person. The Prophet regularly instructed his followers to be sincere in everything they did and explained to them the exact meaning of sincerity, as well as its opposite: hypocrisy. Many traditions bear witness to this. Zayd ibn Arqam records the Prophet as saying: 'Whoever says with sincerity that there is no god save God shall enter Paradise.' When asked what this sincerity was, he replied: 'Let his very oath debar him from what God has forbidden.'

Sincerity is the very base on which a Muslim is to build his whole life. It is in this world that he is put to the test, because every step taken on earth will be judged and the reward given accordingly. One should therefore think of the consequences beforehand. 'Reckon with yourselves,' said Umar, 'before you are reckoned with in the next world; and weigh your own actions before they are weighed on the divine scales of justice; and prepare yourself for the great appearance before God.'

A sincere person is honest first with God and then with people, because he knows very well that God hears and sees all things. As he believes that he will be judged in His presence and will be held responsible for all of his words and deeds, thoughts, he thinks twice before doing anything. For this reason the sincerity and candour of believers are among the most significant signs of the firmness of their faith.

God has made the sincere attitude of the messengers, who always sought to earn the approval of God, an example for believers: 'And tell of Our servants Ibrahim, Ishaq, and Yaqub: men of might and vision whom We made with the pure thought of the Hereafter. They shall be with Us among the righteous whom We have chosen.' (38:45-47)

Those who turn to God in sincerity are praised in the Quran. The Quran says: '...let those rejoice who abstain from idol worship and turn to God in repentance. Give good news to My servants, who listen to My Word and follows what is best in it. These are the ones whom God has guided; they are the people of understanding.' (39:17-18)

Right and sincere intention should guide one in everything one does. The Prophet warned that one should not seek wealth and even knowledge in order to gain personal prestige. It is selflessness, true intentions and being faithful to God and mankind that bring the final reward in the Hereafter. Ubayy ibn Kaab said: 'Acquire knowledge and use it. Do not acquire it in order thereby to enhance yourselves. Otherwise a time will come when learning will be used as an adornment in the manner of clothes.'

Yet another hadith illustrates that the Prophet taught that lust for fame was the worst single danger for man and only sincerity and right intentions would serve to gain him eternal life. On his deathbed, Shaddad ibn Aus said to those around him: 'What I fear most for this community is ostentation and the harbouring of secret desires.' Sufyan Thauri explained the meaning

of 'secret desires': 'It is the fondness of praise for one's good deeds.' When the Prophet himself was questioned on this subject, he said that 'secret desires' were harboured, for example, by those who sought knowledge, because the idea that people would then come and sit at their feet was pleasing to them.

The importance of deeds performed solely for God's sake is stressed in many hadiths: 'God accepts those deeds which were performed purely for His sake and which were meant to seek His pleasure.' (Abu Daud)

One should always act with fear of God in one's heart for God sees every deed and perceives every thought in the mind of man.

The Prophet once came across Abu Masud Ansari beating his slave. 'You should know, Abu Masud,' he said, 'that God has more power over you than you have over this slave.' Abu Masud trembled on hearing these words of the Prophet. 'Messenger of God,' he said, 'I am freeing this slave for God's sake.' 'If you had not acted thus,' said the Prophet, 'the flames of Hell would have engulfed you.'

Sincerity also involves putting oneself in others' shoes and not entertaining suspicions, as well as rejoicing in others' prosperity and refraining from jealousy.

Abdullah ibn Abbas once said: 'Whenever I hear that rain has fallen on a Muslim town, I am happy, even though I myself have no cattle grazing there.'

The opposite of a sincere person is a hypocrite. The signs of a hypocrite are clearly given in the Quran and the Sunnah. A hypocrite is a person who 1) lies or distorts the truth, 2) does not keep his promises and obligations, and, 3) divulges the secrets entrusted to him by one person to other people. The Quran and the hadith explicitly condemn hypocrisy in very strong terms and consider it one of the greater sins barring one's entry to Paradise. Hypocrisy is an evil, which arises out of a word, uttered by the tongue or a motion expressed by signs or gestures, which does not correspond with the heart or mind. So, when there is a contradiction between an action and the intention behind it, the result is hypocrisy.

God dislikes all kinds of hypocrisy, whether in words, deeds or gestures. The Quran says: 'The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of Hell...' (4:145).

According to Messenger of God, 'There are three signs of a hypocrite, even if he fasts, prays and asserts that he is a Muslim: when he speaks, he lies, when he makes a promise, he breaks it, and when he is trusted, he betrays his trust.'

The Quran and the Sunnah have given us guidance in every walk of life. Putting their teachings into practice will result in one becoming true to God, thus earning the title of a sincere and God-fearing person.



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Speech and Knowledge Competition 2023

Knowledge Test: History - Palestine and Al-Aqsa Mosque

Before the arrival of the Israelites, the land of Palestine was inhabited by various ancient peoples and tribes, such as Canaanites, Philistines, Amorites. The most prominent group in the region were the Canaanites. They were an ancient Semitic-speaking people who lived in the area from at least the 3rd millennium BCE. The term "Canaan" itself was often used to refer to this region in ancient times.

Prophet Ibrahim (A) was born in Ur, ancient Mesopotamia (now Iraq). His stance against idolatry caused conflict, leading him from Ur to Harran (in present-day Turkey), where he preached monotheism. Commanded by God, he moved to Canaan (covering modern-day Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria). Facing famine, he and his wife Sarah temporarily relocated to Egypt, then returned to Canaan with Hagar. Obeying God, Ibrahim left Hagar and his son Ishmael in Mecca, where he later built the Kaaba. Ibrahim died in Canaan, buried in Hebron, leaving behind his sons Ishmael in Mecca and Isaac in Canaan.

The Al-Aqsa Mosque, linked with multiple prophets, was first built by Ibrahim (A) after constructing the Kaaba. This came to be known as Beteyel (meaning the House of Allah in Hebrew).

When prophet Yusuf (as) had attained power in Egypt, he invited his family—father, mothers and brothers—to live with him in Egypt. They readily accepted the offer and moved from Palestine to Egypt. No one from Yaqub's (as) family was left to take care of Beteyel/Masjid al-Aqsa. Thus, he gave charge of the masjid to the local inhabitants, the Palestinians.

The Israelite arrived in Canaan (Palestine) in the 13th century BCE with Musa (A).

Prophet Musa (A) was born in Egypt during the Israelites' persecution. To evade Pharaoh's decree to kill Israelite newborns, his mother placed him in the Nile; he was later raised in Pharaoh's household. Fleeing Egypt after an accidental killing, Musa (A) settled in Midian, marrying one of Prophet Shuaib's (A) daughters in exchange for labor. Allah later commanded him to liberate the Israelites from Egypt. Leading them out, Musa parted the Red Sea to escape Pharaoh's army.

Musa guided the Israelites towards Canaan (Palestine), but their refusal to enter it due to fear of formidable inhabitants led Allah to have them wander the desert for 40 years. A later generation eventually entered Canaan.



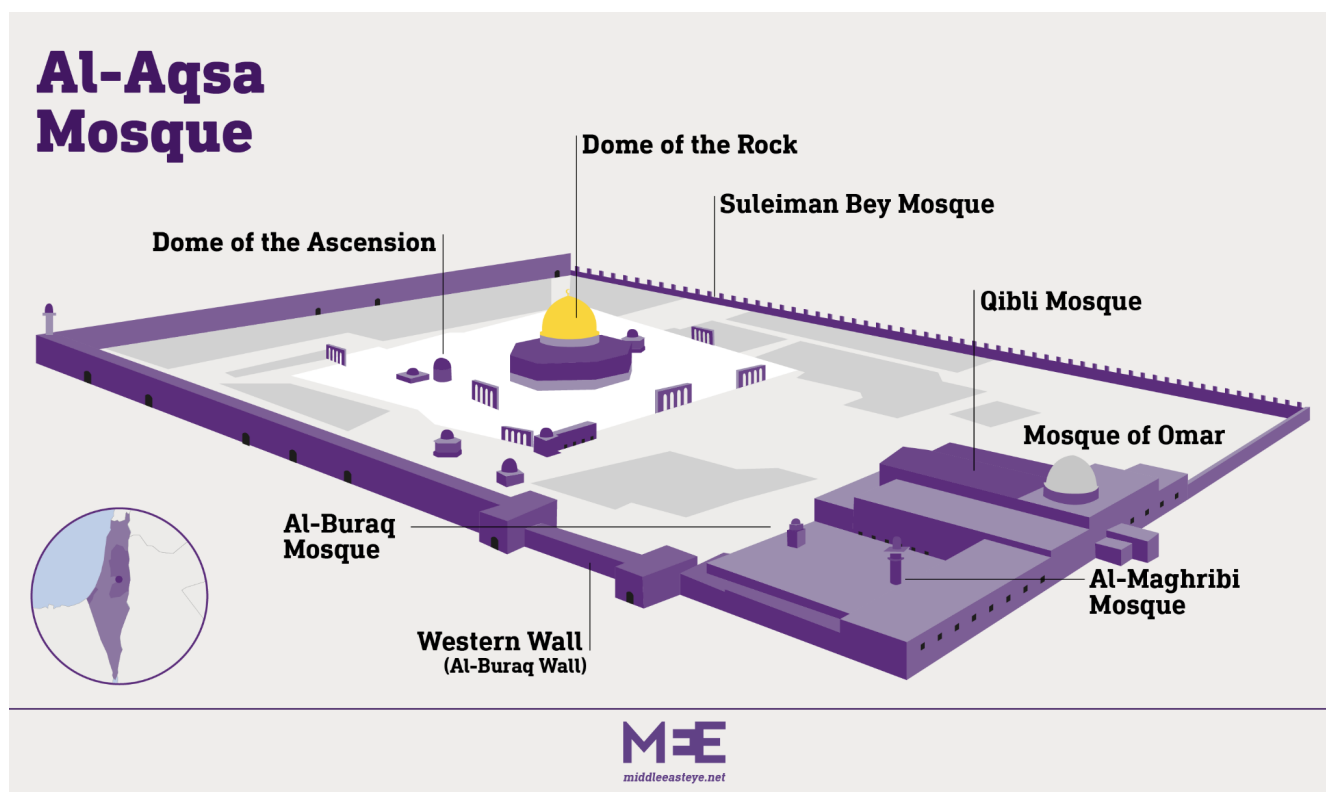
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During Prophet Samuel's (A) time, the leaderless Bani Israel sought a king, leading to Allah appointing Talut. In a subsequent battle against the Philistines, the young shepherd Dawud (David) defeated the giant Jalut (Goliath) with a stone, showcasing his faith and Allah's support, leading to an Israelite victory.

Haram al-Sharif (the noble Sanctuary) or Al-Aqsa Compound or Temple Mount Complex holds immense significance in Islamic religious tradition as well as history. It was Sulayman (as) who rebuilt the temple (Masjid al-Aqsa) with the support and help of the indigenous people, principally the Palestinians. The Babylonian laid siege to Jerusalem and took over the city and Palestine in 587 BC. They destroyed the temple/Masjid al-Aqsa and enslaved all the people. The Persian King Cyrus the Great rescued the Bani Israel after seventy years of slavery in Babylon and permitted them to return to Palestine. In the year 70 CE, the Romans captured Jerusalem and destroyed the temple one more time.



Hazrat Maryam (A) was under the care of Prophet Zakariya (A). She stayed in a mihrab in the Al-Aqsa compound at Jerusalem, where angels used to bring food for her from heaven. Hazrat Isa (A) lived and preached in the Al-Aqsa compounds.



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Al-Aqsa mosque is known as the first qibla of Muslims—the direction toward which Muslims face to offer their salat—as well as the third holiest site in Islam. It is built on the site where the noble Messenger (saws) led all the earlier Prophets in prayer when he was transported by night from Masjid al-Haram before his Miraj (ascension to Heaven). Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, is the first one then who restored Al-Aqsa. He recognized the sight but nothing was built. When Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan held the office in the year 66 A.H., he rebuilt Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock.



According to the **Jewish people**, the First Temple (Solomon's Temple) was built on the Al-Aqsa compound during the reign of King Solomon (Prophet Sulaiman) in the 10th century BCE. The temple was the central place of worship for the Jewish people and the primary symbol of their religion and nationhood. It was the most sacred site in ancient Judaism. The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE during the conquest of Jerusalem, leading to the Babylonian Exile of the Jewish people. The Second Temple was built on the same site following the return of the Jewish people from Babylonian exile around 516 BCE. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.

For Christians, Al-Aqsa compounds are significant as part of the historical and religious context in which Jesus lived and preached, and they feature in several New Testament narratives. The First and Second temples are important in Christian tradition because Jesus interacted with these sites. According to the New Testament, Jesus was presented at the Temple as a child, he taught at the Temple during his ministry, and he predicted the destruction of the Second Temple.



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History of Palestine State

Balfour Declaration

British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, issued the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, a letter to Lord Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community. The declaration expressed the British government's support for the establishment of "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. Several factors and considerations led to this declaration:

- Zionist Movement's Lobbying: The Zionist movement, advocating for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
- British Strategic Interests: During World War I, Britain had strategic interests in the Middle East, including maintaining access to trade routes and countering the influence of the Ottoman Empire. Supporting a Jewish homeland in Palestine was seen as a way to secure British interests in the region.
- War-Time Diplomacy: Britain sought Jewish support, particularly in the United States and Russia, to bolster the Allies' position in World War I. The British government believed that supporting Zionist aspirations would help to garner this support.

A British Mandate was created in 1923 and lasted until 1948. During that period, the British facilitated mass Jewish immigration – many of the new residents were fleeing Nazism in Europe.

1930s Arab Revolt:

- Escalating tensions eventually led to the first Arab Revolt, which lasted from 1936 to 1939.
- In April 1936, the newly formed Arab National Committee called on Palestinians to launch a general strike
- The six-month strike was brutally repressed by the British, who launched a mass arrest campaign and carried out punitive home demolitions
- The second phase of the revolt began in late 1937 and was led by the Palestinian peasant resistance movement





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- By the second half of 1939, Britain had massed 30,000 troops in Palestine.
- the British collaborated with the Jewish settler community and formed armed groups
- In those three years of revolt, 5,000 Palestinians were killed, 15,000 to 20,000 were wounded and 5,600 were imprisoned.
- An estimated 376,415 Jewish immigrants, mostly from Europe, arrived in Palestine between 1920 and 1946

UN Partition Plan

- By 1947, the Jewish population had ballooned to 33 percent of Palestine, but they owned only 6 percent of the land.
- The United Nations adopted Resolution 181, which called for the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states.
- The Palestinians rejected the plan because it allotted about 55 percent of Palestine to the Jewish state, including most of the fertile coastal region.
- At the time, the Palestinians owned 94 percent of historic Palestine and comprised 67 percent of its population.

1948 Nakba - the ethnic cleansing of Palestine

- In April 1948, more than 100 Palestinian men, women and children were killed in the village of Deir Yassin on the outskirts of Jerusalem.
- That set the tone for the rest of the operation, and from 1947 to 1949, more than 500 Palestinian villages, towns and cities were destroyed in what Palestinians refer to as the Nakba, or “catastrophe” in Arabic.
- An estimated 15,000 Palestinians were killed, including in dozens of massacres.
- The Zionist movement captured 78 percent of historic Palestine. The remaining 22 percent was divided into what are now the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip.
- An estimated 750,000 Palestinians were forced out of their homes.
- Today their descendants live as six million refugees in 58 squalid camps throughout Palestine and in the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt.
- On May 15, 1948, Israel announced its establishment.
- The following day, the **first Arab-Israeli war** began and fighting ended in January 1949 after an armistice between Israel and Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.
- In December 1948, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 194, which calls for the right of return for Palestinian refugees.



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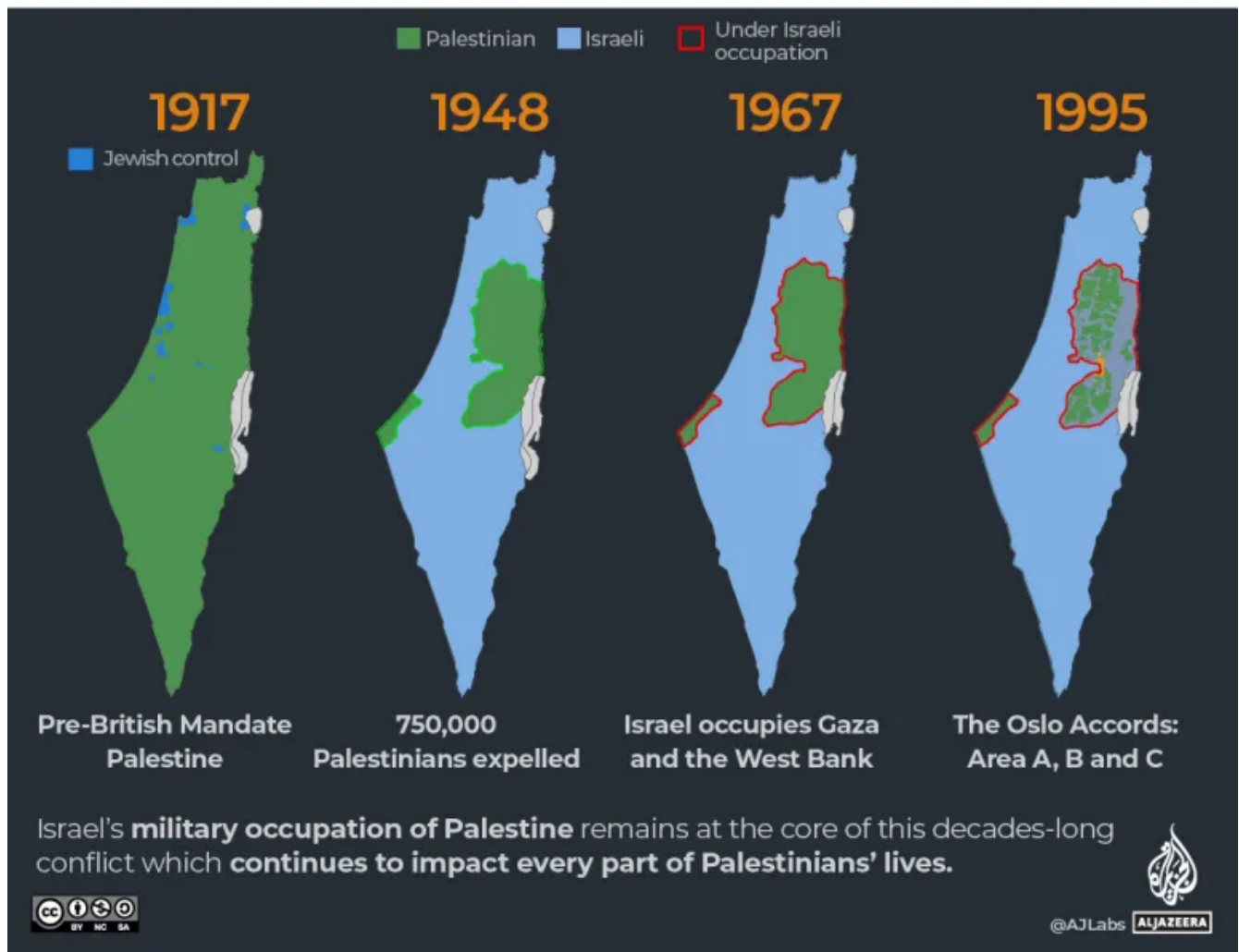
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THE NAKBA

What is the Nakba?

Every year, on

May 15 Palestinians around the world mark the Nakba, or **catastrophe**, referring to the **ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948**.



The years after the Nakba

- At least 150,000 Palestinians remained in the newly created state of Israel and lived under a tightly controlled military occupation for almost 20 years before they were eventually granted Israeli citizenship.
- Egypt took over the Gaza Strip, and in 1950, Jordan began its administrative rule over the West Bank.



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- In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was formed, and a year later, the Fatah political party was established.

Naksa - Six-Day War and the settlements

- On June 5, 1967, Israel occupied the rest of historic Palestine, including the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan Heights and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula during the Six-Day War against a coalition of Arab armies.
- For some Palestinians, this led to a second forced displacement, or Naksa, which means “setback” in Arabic.

The first Intifada 1987-1993

- The first Palestinian Intifada erupted in the Gaza Strip in December 1987 after four Palestinians were killed when an Israeli truck collided with two vans carrying Palestinian workers.
- Protests spread rapidly to the West Bank with young Palestinians throwing stones at Israeli army tanks and soldiers.
- In 1988, the Arab League recognised the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.
- According to the Israeli human rights organisation B’Tselem, 1,070 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces during the Intifada, including 237 children. More than 175,000 Palestinians were arrested.

The Oslo years and the Palestinian Authority

- The Intifada ended with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and the formation of the Palestinian Authority (PA), an interim government that was granted limited self-rule in pockets of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- The PLO recognised Israel on the basis of a two-state solution and effectively signed agreements that gave Israel control of 60 percent of the West Bank, and much of the territory’s land and water resources.
- The PA was supposed to make way for the first elected Palestinian government running an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with its capital in East Jerusalem, but that has never happened.
- Critics of the PA view it as a corrupt subcontractor to the Israeli occupation that collaborates closely with the Israeli military in clamping down on dissent and political activism against Israel.
- In 1995, Israel built an electronic fence and concrete wall around the Gaza Strip, snapping interactions between the split Palestinian territories.

The second Intifada

- The second Intifada began on September 28, 2000, when Likud opposition leader Ariel Sharon made a provocative visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound with thousands of security forces deployed in and around the Old City of Jerusalem.



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- Clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces killed five Palestinians and injured 200 over two days.
- At the time the Oslo Accords were signed, just over 110,000 Jewish settlers lived in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Today, the figure is more than 700,000 living on more than 100,000 hectares (390sq miles) of land expropriated from the Palestinians.

The Palestinian division and the Gaza blockade

- PLO leader Yasser Arafat died in 2004, and a year later, the second Intifada ended, Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip were dismantled, and Israeli soldiers and 9,000 settlers left the enclave.
- A year later, Palestinians voted in a general election for the first time.
- Hamas won a majority. However, a Fatah-Hamas civil war broke out, lasting for months, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of Palestinians.
- Hamas expelled Fatah from the Gaza Strip, and Fatah – the main party of the Palestinian Authority – resumed control of parts of the West Bank.
- In June 2007, Israel imposed a land, air and naval blockade on the Gaza Strip, accusing Hamas of “terrorism”.



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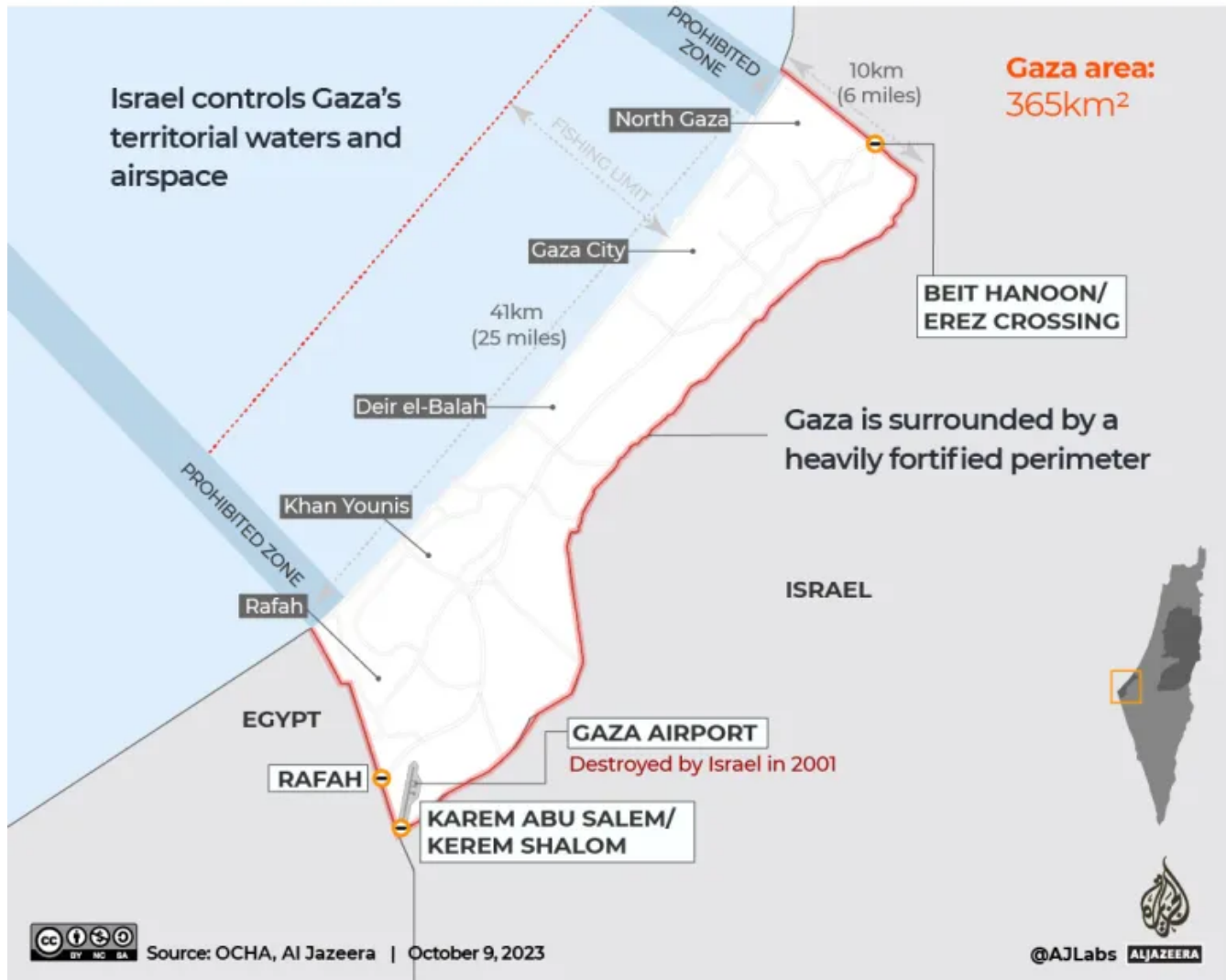
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ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

The besieged Gaza Strip

The Palestinian enclave – home to some 2.3 million people – has been under an **Israeli air, land and sea blockade** since 2007.



The wars on the Gaza Strip

- Israel has launched four protracted military assaults on Gaza: in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2021. Thousands of Palestinians have been killed, including many children, and tens of thousands of homes, schools and office buildings have been destroyed.
- Rebuilding has been next to impossible because the siege prevents construction materials, such as steel and cement, from reaching Gaza.